

Enterprise

BUSINESS PROFILE

Trollinger: 'Business is people to people'

By MARDELL GRIFFIN
Chronicle Staff Writer

Contract Office Furnishings started 10 years ago with two employees, owner Tom Trollinger and his wife.

"I was salesman and deliveryman, and she was the secretary and bookkeeper," Trollinger said of the couple's job descriptions when the business first opened.

This year Contract Office Furnishings did "seven figures" worth of business and was named Distributor/Supplier of the Year for the state of North Carolina by the Raleigh/Durham/Triad Minority Business Development Center and the Atlanta Regional Office of the Minority Business Development Agency.

"There are a lot of agencies like the Minority Business Development Agency that assist businesses and help them grow," Trollinger said. He pointed out that the Triad Minority Entrepreneurs, the Roger Page Business and Technology Center, the minority vendor programs sponsored by the city of Winston-Salem, Wachovia Bank, R.J. Reynolds, AT&T, Du Pont, Burlington Industries and other large organizations are some of the places to which new businesses can turn for help.

"Of course you still have to compete," he added. "But before these programs were implemented, there wasn't even the opportunity (to compete)."

Trollinger, who manages to balance warmth and directness at the same time, tries to pave the way for other minority concerns. "I try to maintain a reputation for a quality product and dependable service, which, I think, gives other minorities opportunities with the companies we deal with," he said of his basic business philosophy.

And the attitude has paid off. A breakfast banquet was held in Durham on Oct. 1; there Trollinger was given a plaque in recognition of his business's accomplishments. Nominees were judged in categories such as length of time in business, stability, how well the business compares to other similar minority businesses and projected outlook for expansion.

Trollinger's expected outlook for expansion is quickly turning into actual expansion.

He is more than doubling the size of his facilities with a 12,000-square-foot warehouse addition, which is planned for completion by early 1988, in back of his 8,000-square-foot showroom at the corner of University Parkway and 14th Street.

"We maintain between \$75,000 and \$100,000 of inventory," Trollinger, a native of Burlington, said in a recent interview. "(With the warehouse) we will be able to

go up to \$175,000 in inventory."

A greater inventory will mean that businesses with standard contracts with Trollinger's company will just be able to call in their furniture orders as they expand. Standard contracts are negotiated on a national level by Fortune 500 companies so that their offices nationwide will be similarly furnished.

"Steelcase negotiates a national contract with a (furniture) company, and we represent them (the furniture outfit) locally," Trollinger explained as an example of the process.

With the expanded inventory, his crews will load their trucks at the warehouse and deliver the items to the clients with very little time needed between making and filling the order.

The company will also begin a furniture leasing department when the new storage facility is built.

From the least-expensive line, a client will be able to lease basic office furnishings for around \$125 per month. That price will include a desk and chair set, a credenza and two side chairs. The same suite from a top-of-the-line furniture group will cost \$300 to \$400 per month.

Leasing has advantages over outright purchasing for many clients. There is no down payment with a lease arrangement, which is especially advantageous to new companies with little operating cash.

"You can get furniture without having to make a large capital outlay," Trollinger said of leasing office furniture. "The expense is 100 percent deductible as a business expense. And after the lease expires, you can purchase the furniture for a nominal fee."

But the main reason for enlarging Contract Office Furnishings' storage space is to store equipment purchased by clients for large jobs covering a period of time to complete.

Trollinger used a current R.J. Reynolds project as an example of the kind of job that requires the use of greater storage space. He will begin delivering the already purchased equipment to the Reynolds site in January but will not finish making deliveries until the five-phase project is completed in August of next year.

"The convenience is what they are looking at," he said of the company's buying ahead of time and stockpiling merchandise. Construction jobs can be unpredictable, and having the equipment ready to move in as soon as building permits is one way companies can better maintain construction schedules, he explained.

The expansion will require Trollinger to hire additional employees, including another designer who will join the designer the company already employs. The design team will work with clients to insure that space is used to their



Blueprints For Success

Tom Trollinger has made it so far, but he's not resting on his laurels. He's making plans and working toward expanding his business to make it even better (photo by James Parker).

best advantage as well as offering aesthetic appeal.

Contract Office Furnishings can supply a company with furnishings from desks to conference tables, window treatments, carpet and floor coverings, screens and partitions, and all sorts and sizes of filing systems. Currently, cubical office systems are the company's most popular units.

The company also offers a large selection of accessories, including paintings and wall hangings; brass, glass and ceramic statuary; silk flower arrangements; desk-top pen-and-pencil sets; bookends; hat racks; lamps and just about anything else a busy executive might want in his/her office surroundings.

Trollinger is involved with developing more than just interiors. He has been a real estate broker active in developing the East Winston area since 1973. He helped bring about Oak Hill Apartments and Bramblegate and Spanish Pines subdivisions.

Currently he is putting together another residential development with 35 lots and a luxury apartment complex with 50 to 120 units. And he is considering "developing some expansion businesses in the Winston-Salem Business Park," he said.

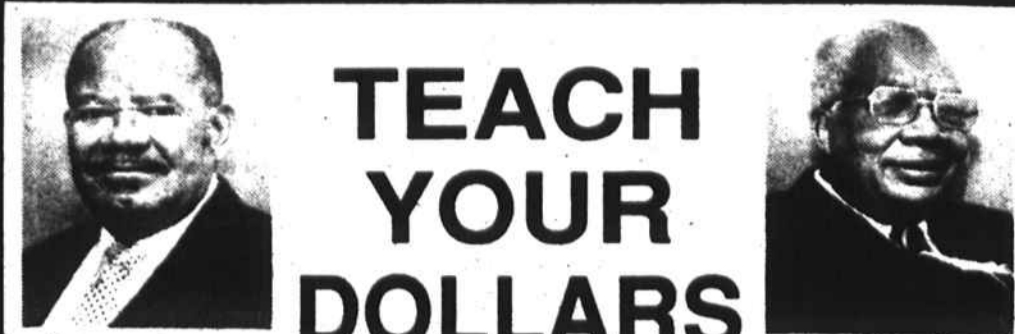
He is also involved with *Minorities and Women in Business* magazine and was one of the publication's initial investors.

But with all his other projects, Trollinger says he still likes the work at Contract Office Furnishings and enjoys the business more than when he first opened it.

"I strive to be a businessman first," he said. "You know, business is actually people to people. And I think the foremost thing to being successful in business is to get along with people."

If you shop with **Chronicle** advertisers,

**LET THEM KNOW
YOU SAW IT IN THE CHRONICLE**



Mr. A. Smith

Mr. Miller

TEACH YOUR DOLLARS

TO HAVE MORE CENTS BY JOINING VICTORY MUTUAL CREDIT UNION

We offer savings, loans and X-mas Club accounts. Our accounts are insured up to \$100,000 by the NCUA. Call or come by our office today!

VICTORY MUTUAL CREDIT UNION
11 W. Sixth St., Winston-Salem, NC 27101 -- (919) 724-9081

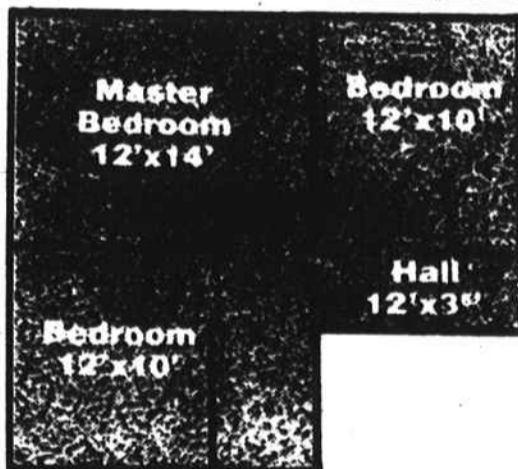
Can't Get Stainmaster Carpet?

PRECISION DECORATING CAN AND WITHIN 72 HOURS. ANY STYLE. ANY COLOR. SALE ENDS SAT.



**DuPont Certified Stainmaster^{CM} Carpets
Manufactured by PHILADELPHIA
With a 5 Year Anti Stain Warranty**

CARPET THREE BEDROOMS AND A HALL



PHILADELPHIA STAINMASTER^{CM}

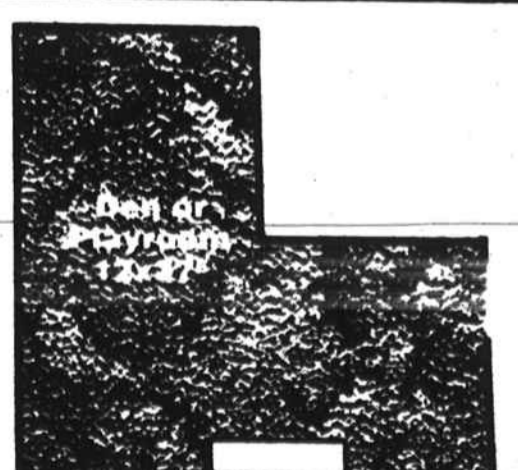
- Applause Style.
- Great looking solid color saxony (plush).
- 25 colors available for Quick Shipment within 72 hours.

CARPET
+
1/2" CUSHION
+
COMPLETELY
INSTALLED

\$84750

Based on 50 sq. yds.

CARPET DEN OR PLAYROOM



PHILADELPHIA STAINMASTER^{CM}

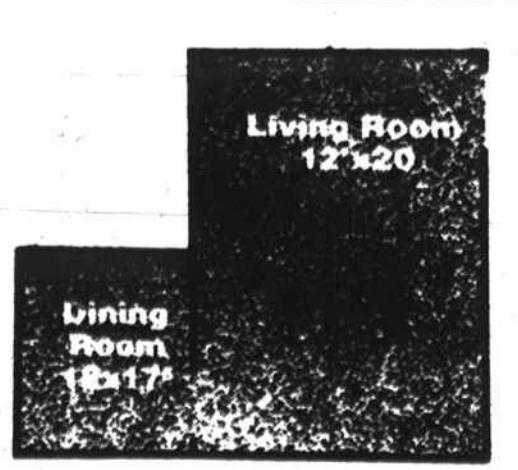
- Northern Light Style and Southern Lights.
- Trackless tweed and Trackless Solid for hi-traffic areas.
- 50 colors available for Quick Shipment within 72 hours.

CARPET
+
1/2" CUSHION
+
COMPLETELY
INSTALLED

\$94750

Based on 50 sq. yds.

CARPET LIVING AND DINING ROOMS



PHILADELPHIA STAINMASTER^{CM}

- Curtain Call Style.
- Heavy saxony (Plush). With elegance and charm.
- 28 colors available for Quick Shipment within 72 hours.

CARPET
+
1/2" CUSHION
+
COMPLETELY
INSTALLED

\$89750

Based on 50 sq. yds.

PRECISION
Decorating Center

CALL
FOR
FREE
ESTIMATES

2701 Peters Creek Parkway • 785-3625 • MON., THURS., FRI. 8 to 8; TUES., WED. 8 to 6 Sat. 9 to 5

LOCAL BEAT

Police ask help of parents to curb vehicle problems

By MARDELL GRIFFIN
Chronicle Staff Writer

Police are concerned that improper use of motorcycle-type vehicles by youngsters in East Winston will result in serious injury or death to one of the young riders.

Although young people using the vehicles are posing a hazard to themselves and others in the city, it is especially a problem in East Winston, a police official said.

When police spot a youngster on city streets riding one of the bikes, they try to pull him over. "And when they see the blue light, they take off -- cutting back and forth in traffic," said Officer David Bruce of the police department's crime prevention unit. "We're afraid someone will be killed."

Parents who don't understand the difference between motorcycles and mopeds and the laws that govern the use of each are causing many of the problems police have with the bikes, Bruce said.

Several young people have been

stopped by police officers in East Winston for improper use of the Honda Spree, a bike parents mistake for a moped when they buy it, Bruce said. But the vehicle is actually a motorcycle and is subject to laws governing motorcycle use. "They (Sprees) look like a moped," Bruce said.

Chief of Police George L. Sweat has issued a letter to Winston-Salem/Forsyth County schoolteachers and parents warning them about the misuse of motorcycle-type vehicles. The letter was prompted by a series of complaints from across the city to the police department about young people riding the bikes on public streets and in public areas.

"I solicit your assistance and cooperation to insure that juveniles are not illegally riding motorized vehicles in the streets or in public vehicular areas," Sweat said in the letter.

"In order to accomplish this, I request that you make your students/children aware of the laws governing these motorized vehicles to

prevent them from unknowingly committing traffic violations."

According to Sweat's letter, to operate a motorcycle on a public street:

- The driver must be at least 16 years old and possess a valid driver's license.

- The vehicle must be equipped with all necessary headlights, tail lights and turn signals.

- The vehicle must be insured.
- The driver must wear an approved helmet and follow all rules of the road.

- The vehicle must be licensed through the Division of Motor Vehicles and possess a valid North Carolina inspection sticker.

The same rules do not apply to mopeds, but a moped operator must be 16 to ride on a public street or in a public vehicular area, Sweat's handout said.

In the letter, the police chief described a moped as "a two- or three-wheeled vehicle which has a motor that does not exceed 50cc piston displacement, has operable pedals and cannot exceed 20 miles per hour."