

New malls: easy pickings for thieves

by Rebecca Denny
Staff Writer

The opening of new shopping malls presents a situation which is "easy picking for professional shoplifters, as well as for amateurs," according to Joe Augustine, executive director of Chapel Hill's Merchant Association.

Shoplifters will try out new malls, just as they will flock to sales, Augustine said.

A mall opening is a massive and confusing thing, Augustine said. New stores are serving unfamiliar customers in great numbers. Stores have completely new staffs, either unfamiliar with the new store or new to their jobs as clerks.

The result of this combination of factors, Augustine said, is that new shopping malls are "viable targets for internal and external shrinkage."

Shoplifting is "big business" in Chapel Hill, according to Augustine. In a survey done by the Merchant's Association a year and a half ago, one store, which was not one of the town's largest, reported 500 cases of shoplifting that were not reported to the police or prosecuted.

Since January 1973, there have been 25 complaints filed for shoplifting, Chapel Hill police records clerk, Flora Houk said. She estimated that 75% were initiated by stores in Eastgate.

On a nation-wide basis, an informal survey conducted by the New York Times in Manhattan stores in 1970 estimated that one out of ten shoppers was a shoplifter.

U.S. News and World Report in 1972 stated

that the incidence of shoplifting nation-wide has increased 221% since 1961.

"The insidious thing about shoplifting is that it affects you and me," Augustine said. It results in added cost of merchandise.

In the New York Times survey retailers estimated that prices could be cut 15% if shoplifting were eliminated.

The largest percentage of loss to a business is through internal and external shrinkage, according to Augustine. Sixty per cent of losses are due to internal shrinkage: loss or damage of merchandise as it is packed, shipped and checked in by a store. Forty per cent of losses are due to external shrinkage: shoplifting, larceny and break-ins.

Shoplifters, according to national studies, come from all economic backgrounds. Teen-agers and young marrieds represent the largest number of shoplifters, according to Augustine.

Shoplifters are generally divided into three classes: amateurs who steal for personal and family profit, professionals who fence their goods, and drug addicts who steal to sustain their habits by fencing stolen goods.

The greatest losses, according to Augustine, come from the day to day incidence of amateur shoplifting.

The rise in shoplifting has caused an increase in the use of human and mechanical means of surveillance. There is a direct and positive correlation between the amount of surveillance and the amount of shoplifting, Augustine said.

Merchants in the new University Mall were generally reluctant to talk about security measures and the problem of shoplifting. After all,

Augustine said, it's like saying the lock on my front door may not work so walk in and help yourself.

Ivey's will employ a combination of TV cameras and uniformed and non-uniformed guards, according to James R. Murray, store manager. Ivey's anticipates no problem with shoplifting in Chapel Hill, he said.

Harris B. Byrd, manager of Belk's, refused to talk about security measures. "We don't want to help the shoplifters," he said. "Any time you open your doors it's a problem." Byrd denied that the mall situation would present any significant problem.

Roses does not anticipate any greater problem with shoplifting than it has in its downtown store, according to Manager W.I. Haithcock. Part-time security personnel will be used as needed, he said.

How effective the Mall Association is in sharing information about shoplifters will influence the amount of shoplifting, Haithcock said. The key is in prosecution, he said. Roses will prosecute all shoplifters.

Billy Arthur refused to comment on security. "I'm not going to tip my hand," he said. "I have no opinion on the question of shoplifting. You never know until it happens."

Augustine commented that the mall stores were not going into business with eyes closed. He felt sure that they would keep security up.

The mall will hire a full-time security guard to police the entire mall, according to Coolidge Porterfield, leasing agent for Northhills, Inc. Off-duty policemen will be hired initially and as

needed when the mall is in normal operation. Porterfield felt that there would not be any greater problem with shoplifting in the mall than in a downtown area.

Chapel Hill Police Chief William Blake expressed concern over the ability of the police department to adequately patrol the new mall without the additional four men it requested from the town board. One patrol man will be responsible for Eastgate, Kroger's and Glenn Lennox and the new mall.

After the mall's opening, the police department will probably assign one man on foot to the mall in addition to the patrol car, Blake said.

The amount of shoplifting will depend on how vigorously the store owners prosecute, Blake said.

Police in the general mall area probably do not act as a deterrent to shoplifting, Augustine commented. The internal surveillance within a store is much more important. Police are necessary to make arrests for shoplifting, however.

Prosecutions for shoplifting have been a problem in the past, Augustine said. Minimum sentences make store owners reluctant to spend time and money prosecuting subsequent cases.

"Everybody's at fault and everybody has some responsibility," Augustine concluded. The detection system is faulty, the courts have been too lenient and the prisons are too full to take more offenders. Citizens also don't want to be involved and fail to report incidents of shoplifting that they see.

Shoplifting is a misdemeanor punishable by up to a \$100 fine and/or a prison sentence of not

more than six months. A second or subsequent offense is punishable with a sentence of not more than two years.

Locally shoplifters are fined and required to pay court costs, according to Steven Bernholz, attorney with the firm of Winston, Coleman and Bernholz. Offenders must also pay the price of an item taken if the item is not recovered. Occasionally a 10 to 30 day sentence is given, he said. In rare cases, for multiple repetitions, a 60 day to six month sentence is handed down, sometimes in addition to a \$100 fine.

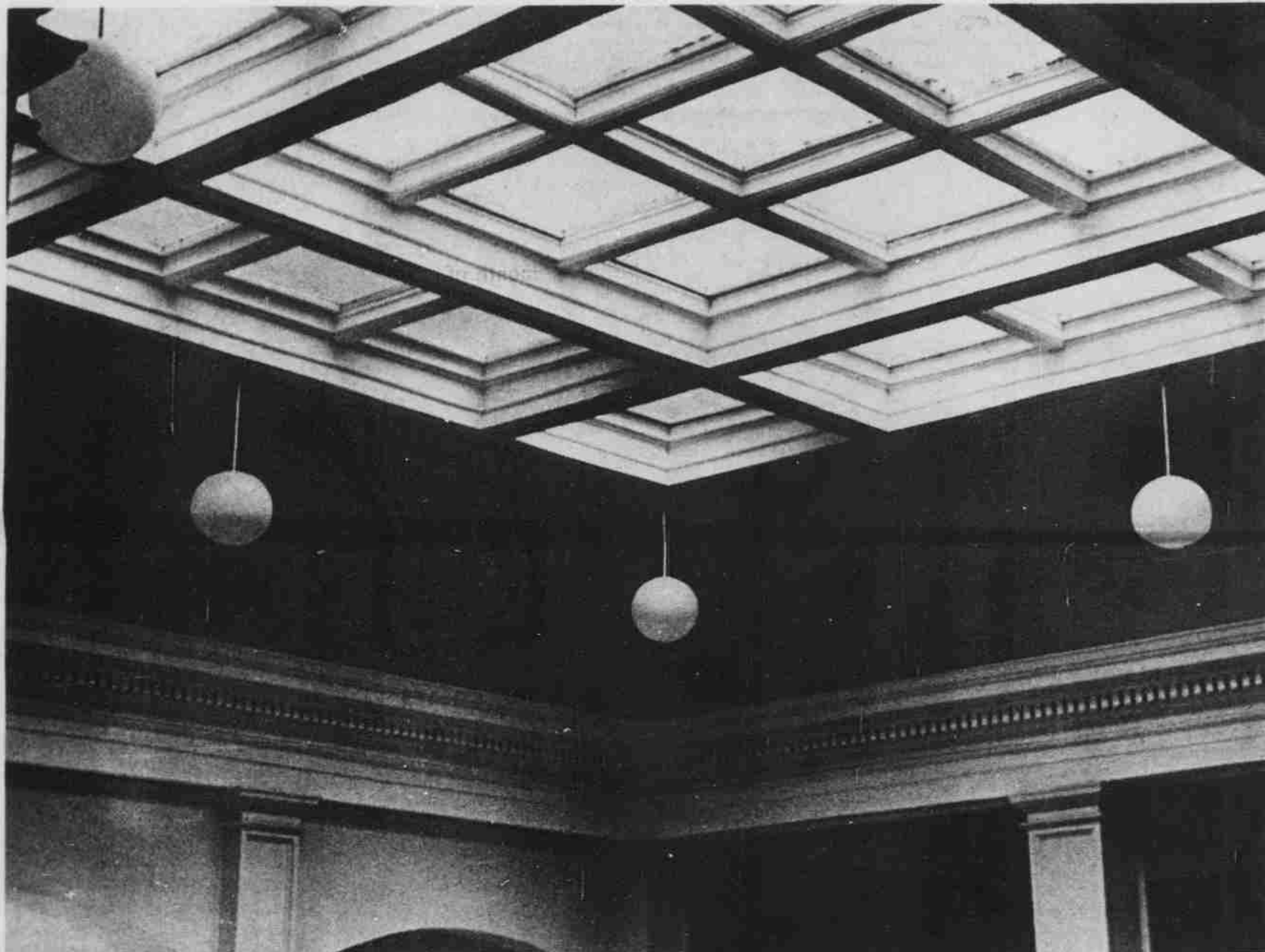
According to the revised law of 1971 shoplifting is defined as the willful concealment of merchandise without authorization. Under this law the item concealed does not have to be taken off the premises to constitute a misdemeanor.

Bernholz noted that few cases of shoplifting appear on the local court calendar. He attributed that to the amount of stealing by employees which was not brought to court, the failure of store to apprehend many shoplifters and the time money loss to many stores involved in prosecutions.

Prosecutions are generally made by chain stores who can afford to release employees to go to court, Bernholz said.

However, shoplifting is "the kind of crime which is not deterred by stiff penalties," Bernholz said. "Shoplifting has social and economic causes and is not a criminal activity even though the law defines it as such," Bernholz added emphatically.

Stores which display their merchandise for shoppers to see and feel are simply "dangling a worm in front of a fish," Bernholz said.



Spheres and squares, angles and lines. Carolina is really pretty interesting to the eye, if you'll keep that orb open as you wander around. This was in Hill Hall; how many had already guessed? (Staff photo by George Brown)

Police fired, then rehired

Frank Chamberlain, Carrboro town manager, requested Carrboro police chief Charles J. Wesson's resignation Monday evening after a weekend of controversy within the police department.

Chamberlain cited an "inability ... to successfully manage and supervise" the police department, and a lack of "significant improvement in managerial capacity" as reasons for Wesson's resignation.

The statement came after the Carrboro aldermen held an emergency meeting late Monday afternoon to discuss the recent dispute.

The trouble began Friday morning when the patrolmen presented a list of grievances to Wesson, and hired a lawyer, Michael Levine of Chapel Hill, to represent them.

Wesson called a meeting Saturday afternoon to talk over the complaints and grievance procedures with the patrolmen. Wesson refused to admit Levine; the men would not enter without Levine.

Wesson then declared nine of Carrboro's police patrolmen suspended or fired. The patrolmen said they had been fired and were ordered by Wesson to turn

in their badges and uniforms and to collect their pay.

A series of meetings began at 3 p.m. Saturday between the patrolmen, Chamberlain, Wesson and the aldermen. At 1:40 a.m. the aldermen reported the men reinstated.

Many of the policemen's complaints were included in the new budget presented by Wesson which were later cut by Chamberlain and the aldermen.

The patrolmen requested a salary increase from \$6,200 to \$7,500 a year, with a payscale to raise salaries \$750 after the first year, \$1,000 after the second, and to offer merit raises after three years.

If accepted, the new budget would provide \$6,510 a year. Additional personnel were also requested in the budget, a full time staff, three policemen and men to staff a detective bureau.

Alderman Mary Riggsbee said that she believed Capt. John Blackwood will fill in for Wesson, but added Chamberlain wanted to think about the appointment.

Blackwood was acting chief as second in command of the department, from November, 1972 (after the previous chief,

John Llewellyn, resigned) until Wesson took over in April.

Chamberlain said the action was not taken as a reaction against this past weekend's events.

Wesson worked almost 12 years with the Greensboro Police Department, but admitted that he never had served in an administrative capacity. He hoped to gain experience in the Carrboro job and planned to take management courses at UNC in the fall.

Wesson denied any conflicts existed within his department when the policemen first presented their complaints. The men argued that a severe morale problem threatened to undermine the department's effectiveness unless something was done immediately.

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County Democrats choose nominees

by Seth Effron
Staff Writer

The Orange County Democratic Executive Committee met last Tuesday and selected a list of four names as suggestions to fill a vacancy left on the County Commissioners by the resignation of Ira Ward.

Procedural matters took up much of the time. Debate as to how the recommendations would be made, how many people would be recommended and in what order they would be recommended were heard.

Nominations were made first. Each precinct in the county was entitled to make as many nominations as it desired. Following the nominations, each nominee would be voted on individually and those receiving 50 percent plus one votes would be recommended to the Commissioners.

The names of those recommended would be submitted in order of the number of votes received. The person receiving the most votes would be the

most highly recommended, and so on.

Jan Penny of Cole Store precinct, the top vote-getter, was nominated by Executive Committee third vice chairman Gerry Cohen. Penny received 190½ votes out of a possible 225. Cohen, the favorite son of East Franklin precinct, was second with 168½ votes. George Sparansy, of Chapel Hill, received 161½ votes to place third. Henry Latane, also of Chapel Hill, rounded out the candidates who got enough votes to be recommended with 135 votes.

Robert Strayhorn, Edward Mann Jr., and Clifton Jones were all nominated, but did not receive the necessary 113 votes to be recommended.

The final selection will be made by the County Commissioners. They are not bound by any of the Democratic Executive Committee's suggestions. If the Commissioners cannot agree on any person within 60 days, the clerk of the superior court is directed by state law to select someone.

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