

December 28, 1973

Ms. Barbara Cloud
% Pittsburgh Press
Blvd. of the Allies
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Ms. Cloud,

Before I comment on your recent "hangup on wallpaper" article in the Press, let me first tell you that we are one of the area's wallcovering distributors. (Note the word wallcovering as opposed to wallpaper) The industry is doing it's darndest to eliminate the old-fashioned connotation of wallpaper and I suppose we haven't succeeded too well. For that matter, we haven't done too well at public relations in general if your article is any indication of our image with the consumer.

The reason we are pushing wallcovering is that very little on the market today is paper. Vinyl is the keyword and since the bulk of material sold for walls is basically vinyl, the word wallpaper is outmoded. The change in our industry is not only apparent by the attempt to change the name, but moreso by it's wide acceptance from Mrs. Housewife. This has been brought about by more durable materials, better and more varied designing and the ease of application that ties in with the do-it-yourself craze.

We have a favorite saying, supposedly first made by a well-known interior decorator of years ago. It is... "Plain walls are the refuge of the artiscially destitute". In other words, painting is the cowards way out and just can't express the personality and individuality of the family or person who lives in the house. Artists have been long known for their suffering and it looks as if the consumer is going to have to suffer a little bit to make their walls expressive.

We as distributors don't place these roadblocks in the way of the consumer. Basically we have had inventory and supply problems created by the factories who simply have not been able to keep up with the demand. This problem has existed the last few years and has been further multiplied by the energy crisis, raw material shortages (vinyls in short supply for example), etc. Patterns that have been promised to be shipped on certain dates are negated by these kinds of shortages, broken printing machinery, labor problems, and a whole raft of other problems.

Believe me, we don't sit here with glee when we have to break promises and tell some lady who has her heart set on seeing her room magically changed by wallcovering that she will have to wait for another day. We are consumers in the market

place as well and we know the frustrations when we can't get something. Besides, it hurts us in the pocketbook as well.

I don't make excuses for poor organization or indifferent clerks. This sort of thing is all too well known, however, in restaurants, government offices, banks and even at newspaper desks. None of us in management condone it, we live with it and attempt to eliminate it when possible. (Incidentally, I noticed one printing or spelling error in your article - on balance - not bad!)

I sincerely hope that our company wasn't involved with any of the procedures mentioned in your article. If so, we apologize. If not, we still apologize for the entire wallcovering industry. I have a feeling that your artistic psyche cannot be fulfilled by a mere medicine chest door knob. If and when you're ready to strike out again from such a narrow decorative base as door knobs, please think of wallcoverings. As I said above, artists must suffer. At least you didn't lose an ear!!!

Yours truly,

M. A. BASKIND CO.

Sanford Baskind

SB/sfb