

Milk crates are in big demand

By Cathy Saathoff
Battalion Staff

The new high-tech fad in interior decorating is hitting local grocery stores from behind, for

it is in the back of the store that brightly colored, multi-purpose milk crates are left.

The crates come in all the colors of the rainbow in local department stores. Obtained legally, they range in price from about \$5.99 to \$11.99.

Students who don't have big decorating budgets but lots of books use them for bookcases; the crates can be stacked evenly or staggered in a variety of

ways. A single crate can serve as a nightstand.

They also work well as laundry baskets, since they fit better in a crowded closet than the round variety, and are sturdier.

Turned upside down, they make strong stools for short people, and motorcyclists strap them to the back of their bikes for mini-trunks.

Pete Scamardo, clerk in the Housewares section at J.C. Penney's in Manor East Mall, said they have the crates in red, yellow and brown, for \$10.99. They also have a variety of other storage bins to coordinate with them.

"Plasticware is selling real well right now," Scamardo said. People buy the bins to keep vegetables in the kitchen as well as for other parts of the house, he said.

Montgomery Wards, also in Manor East, doesn't usually carry the crates, but had a special order of them on sale last week for \$5.97. A clerk said they are available from the Wards catalog for about \$8.99, and come in white, yellow and brown.

Behind grocery stores, the color selection isn't as wide but the price is more in tune with a student's budget.

Those who can stand having the sticky and sometimes smelly crates in their cars take advantage of the crates left outside overnight. It's illegal to take the crates, but judging from the number seen on motorcycles, it's not uncommon.

Skagg's Alpha Beta sells the crates for \$6.99 in white, red, brown and yellow in the front of the store. E.J. Baca, assistant grocery manager, said they haven't noticed any problems with

crates being stolen from behind the store, but said they are only left outside from about 9 p.m. to 4 a.m.

A Safeway spokesman said they keep their gray crates inside the store, so theft is no problem.

Jeff Brown, manager of Piggly Wiggly #54 at 2700 Texas Avenue, said "We've only missed a very few. We don't lose that many."

Brown said the neighborhood around his store, which is in front of Doux Chene apartments and by K-Mart, is well patrolled. He has only heard of a couple of instances of milk crates being taken, but often sees motorcycle riders with them strapped to their bikes.

The loss doesn't hurt the store, he said, because the crates belong to the milk companies.

Ray Lee, local distributor for Oak Farms Dairies, said theft is a problem at the beginning and end of each school year. At the beginning, he said, people want them for bookshelves, and at the end they use them as boxes for moving.

Lee said he tries to get the stores to keep the crates inside until they are picked up, but they usually just throw them outside. Oak Farms supplies milk to 7-11 and Korner Pantry.

Lee said the blue plastic crates are worth about \$13 each. People have offered to buy the crates, he said, but they are imprinted with a warning on the side that says it is illegal to use the crate for any other purpose than to haul milk.

One man at another Oak Farms outlet was melting the crates down and selling the plastic to a toy manufacturer, Lee said.

Oak Farms also has metal crates, but Lee said they are hardly ever taken. The plastic ones, besides being colorful, are lighter and easier to handle than the metal.

Bill Peters, comptroller for Lilly Dairy Products in Kurten, said they lost about 4,000-5,000 thousand crates last year in this area.

"They go somewhere," Peters said. "They don't break." They lose more and more of their green crates each year as their business increases, Peters said. Each crate costs Lilly about \$5, he said.

Lilly supplies dairy products to most local stores except Weingarten and Safeway, which have their own brands.

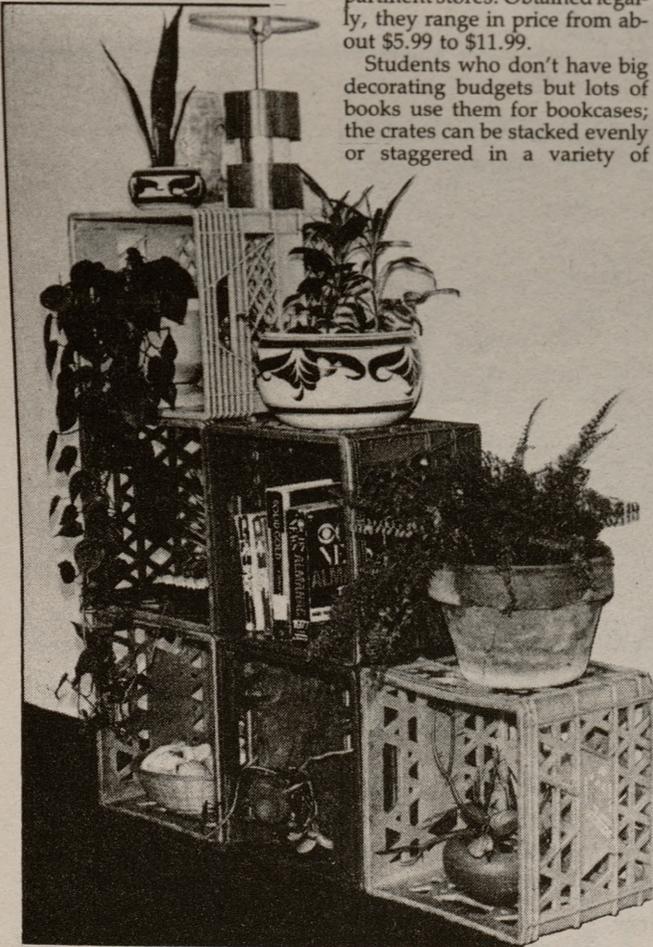
But don't get any bright ideas. Lt. Bernie Kapella of the College Station Police Department said that they have never caught anyone stealing milk crates. If they did, it would be up to the owner of the crates, the dairy, to press charges.

If the dairy doesn't file, the culprit gets off with a warning and a possible heart attack.

But if they do ... If the value of the loot is under \$5, it is considered a Class C misdemeanor, to be tried in Municipal Court. A fine of from \$1 to \$203.50 may be imposed, Kapella said.

If the value is between \$5 and \$20, it is a Class B Misdemeanor. Trial is in County Court, and punishment is up to one year in the county jail and up to \$500 fine.

So the crates may look good, but if you need bookshelves, or a laundry basket, walk in the front door of the store to get them, not around the back.



Six red and blue milk crates make a shelf for plants and books. The crates are available at local department stores, but some people steal them from behind grocery stores.

Photo by Cathy Saathoff

Memorial fund started for Chapin

United Press International

HOLLYWOOD — A Harry Chapin Memorial Fund has been established to carry on the late singer's crusade to feed the hungry.

A spokesman for the firm that managed Chapin said Monday the fund was started in response to calls from friends and fans who wanted to carry on the balladeer's work.

Chapin was killed last Thursday when a truck hit his car on a New York freeway.

Chapin raised large sums for political causes and was appointed by President Carter to the Presidential Commission on International, Domestic and World Hunger, said Ken Cragen, president of Cragen & Co.

"The purpose of the fund is to continue the humanitarian work Harry was so committed to, particularly the eradication of world hunger," he said.

"Our plan is to appoint a distinguished group of people who will decide how the fund can best be utilized to continue the work that Harry began."

The address of the fund is Post Office Box 538, Huntington, N.Y. 11743.

Cable a boon to advertisers

United Press International
NEW YORK — As few as 15 per cent of all the beer drinkers in America drink 85 per cent of all the beer — and therein could lie what Bill Mulvey calls "the Golden Age of Television."

Mulvey won't have anything to do with the dawning. He's too busy right now being the lady author of a feminist novel, but in his day, few people knew more about the dollar-sign soul of television than Mulvey. The genial Irishman, as "Sharon Steele," has just co-authored with Richard Fehr a sizzler titled "A Dangerous Woman" for Warner Books.

"The editor thought such a female-oriented book needed a woman's name instead of the names of two men, so he changed it to Sharon Steele," said Mulvey. "I don't mind.

People get a kick out of the fact they can call me Sharon — particularly at a bar I hang out in in New Canaan, Conn."

Mulvey is a veteran of the advertising business, having served as a top-ranking executive for McCann Erickson and Cunningham & Walsh.

He also partnered the late Chet Huntley for seven years in the NBC anchorman's Horizons Communications Corp. and he co-founded the Hatteras Yacht Co. before turning author.

"Directly or indirectly, in the 40 years I've been in the business, I've been involved in the buying of about a billion dollars of television and about half a billion of radio, magazines and newspapers," he said.

Expertise drawn from that record, along with that small but formidable handful of beer drinkers, has convinced Mulvey that "we're in for a tremendous revolution in telecommunications."

"We're going to end up with three sources of television programs," he said. "Television as you know it now — with three

basic networks — cable and satellite.

But if the predicted revolution benefits the viewers, it will benefit the advertisers even more in Mulvey's estimation because, like "general" magazines of the 1930s and 1940s, general audience television today is being fragmented into areas of intense specialization.

That's good news for the advertisers of such products as beer (remember the formidable 15 per cent?) because now they will be able to go after the professional chug-a-luggers without wasting their money on teetotalers and bubble-sippers.

"About 15 per cent of your beer drinkers drink 85 per cent of your beer," said Mulvey, remembering the axiom from his days in advertising's fast lane. "Beer drinkers like football. Now the makers of Miller Beer, for example, can buy just the football network. It will cost them less money and they'll hit their hard core of users."

"I think it's going to be tremendous. Every interest will be served."

FOCUS

Editor Cathy Saathoff
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Focus will accept any items submitted for publication, although the decision to publish lies solely with the editor. Deadline is 5 p.m. the Thursday before publication.