

Shoplifters From All Walks of Life

By DAVID CAMPBELL
Staff Writer



termed unconventional. "At times, I've given my last dollar to a shoplifter," Nordby said. "You just can't arrest everybody sometimes being caught is punishment enough." "You can't jeopardize the community status of children or parents when a family member is 'sick,'" he said. Nordby regards most shoplifting as snap decisions, crimes without prior intent. Nordby has more than 8,000 shoplifting arrests to his credit, but he is the first to recommend discretionary approaches to those who get caught. He's quick to avoid generalities about petty thieves. He knows shoplifters come from all walks of life.

"Less than 10 per cent of those I've arrested were youths," he said. "You hear about the poor stealing, but it's a

✓—To A2, Col. 1

The rip-off epidemic needs some strong medicine before the fever will break.

Shoplifters will steal from \$3.5 billion to \$9 billion worth of merchandise from supermarkets, department stores and other businesses in 1973, the experts say.

The construction industry will lose billions of dollars to pilferage and vandalism this year.

Shoplifting, pilferage and vandalism should be synonymous with rising prices, as a simple theft has far-reaching effects. It will cost consumers 3 per cent of each grocery purchase, say the experts.

And when a contractor submits a job bid, it may contain up to 3 per cent added cost for vandalism and theft accounting.

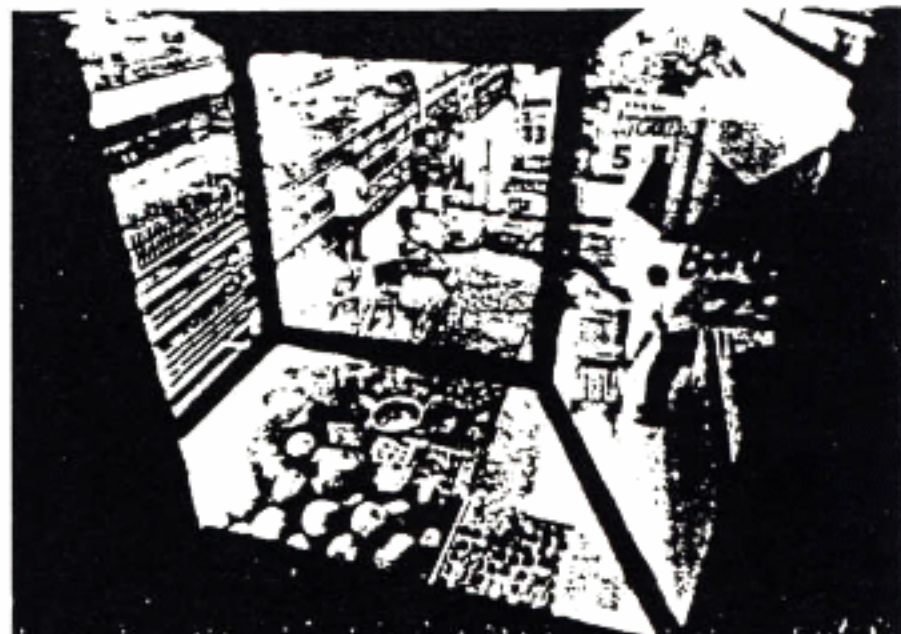
Sacramento retailers will first have to understand how great a problem there is before solutions can be implemented, said Charles C. Nordby, president of International Security Systems.

Nordby has spent 28 years deterring the thief. He's a soft-spoken man, an author of an as yet unpublished book, "The Rich Are Stealing," and his approach to store security could be

THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE SACRAMENTO UNION, DATED OCTOBER 24, 1973. I HAD INSTALLED SECURITY WINDOWS AND TRAINED MEN TO WORK BEHIND THEM IN THE MONTHS PRECEDING THIS STORY. NOW IT WAS TIME FOR THE THIEF IN SACRAMENTO TO GET A TASTE OF RALEY'S NEW SECURITY PROGRAM, AND SOON THE HONEST CUSTOMER WOULD BE ABLE TO NOTICE THE EFFECT OF MY PROGRAM BY SEEING LOWER FOOD PRICES AT RALEY'S. (see the Raley's ad dated Jan. 2, 1974 in chapter 3 of this book)

THIS SHOULD PUT AN END TO MR. COLLINGS ATTEMPT TO PLACE ME IN THEIR COMPANY IN 1974 OR 1975, AFTER THE TURNAROUND.

A2—The Sacramento Union, Wednesday, October 24, 1973



Two views . . . See-through mirror device and sign let potential shoplifters know they may be under surveillance.

Today's Shoplifter: All Walks of Life

✓—From A1

relative thing. Every neighborhood has the problem.

"In a good neighborhood in San Francisco, the average shoplifter will be 30 to 50 years old, white, makes more than \$10,000 a year and we'll catch just as many there as in the poor side of town," Nordby said.

The incident which affected him the most in those 28 years, he said, was of a fourth-year law student at University of California's Boalt Hall.

"This young man, when we caught him, confessed to stealing steaks for two years. It started out as a bet between friends, then it became an obsession," Nordby said.

"We were going to let him go, but when he confessed to stealing almost \$5,000 worth of steaks, we had no choice," he said. The state bar association learned of the student's problem. Nordby said, and the youth was expelled from Boalt—even though he was a top student.

"And one fellow, when we asked him what he did, said: 'You are not going to like this, but I'm a psychiatrist,'" Nordby said. He said a minister was among those he's penciled onto a shoplifting report.

Nordby points to employees, service-men and distributors as being responsible for a large share of retailer rip-offs—he said training detectives to identify the "60 or more" schemes he's found is one of the hardest aspects of the problem.

"But we know inside theft is at least as bad as consumer theft," he said. He said

no more than 20 per cent of shoplifters need to be prosecuted. And he said the most significant problem is the retailer himself.

"The supermarket has overlooked its obligation to the honest customer for too long," Nordby said. Until profit margins decreased during the past two to three years, retailers were just content to forget about the problem, he said.

Independent stores often go out of business because of unchecked theft, he said. And one of his more far-out theories is that shoplifting has been used by the national chains as a weapon against the independent stores.

"Until recently, independents would say, 'If the big stores do something about shoplifting, then we'll do something,'" Nordby said. Because of mass merchandising, he said, the national chains can afford to lose 3 per cent of sales to the thief.

"A recent presidential fact-finding commission investigating supermarket monopolies," Nordby said, "looked into the nation's four largest chains. The commission found a 3 per cent profit advantage over smaller stores, and that 3 per cent has never shown up to the chain stockholders."

Independents, unknowingly, were ignoring a major cause of store failures, he said. Nordby said the West's largest chain will lose \$180 million to internal and external theft in 1973—and you won't see security guards, deterrents or an anti-shoplifting campaign in that chain.

"Independents ignoring the problem will continue to go under," Nordby said.

National studies indicate an independent market goes under every 12 minutes, helped along by avoiding confronting the shoplifting problem, he said.

Nordby's company manufactures security windows and other devices. He also is a consultant, presently establishing security for a large Sacramento supermarket and drug store chain. And he's advising the Norcal Grocers Association on how to stop this year's predicted \$4 million to \$5 million shoplifting loss.

Don Beaver, Norcal Grocers director, agrees with Nordby.

"The merchants have to help themselves," Beaver said, "and the public has to realize how serious a problem we have."

Security devices and store detectives, proper display and merchandising techniques, management and employee commitment and a comprehensive public education campaign are approaches which Sacramento retailers must follow to touch the problem, Beaver said. Shoplifting incidents in the city are up 36 per cent in 1973 compared with 1972.

Merchants surveyed said they are "cracking down" on shoplifters in Sacramento, but when the shoplifters go to court, most are given fines and probation.

"We have to go on a 'justice' theory," said Neil Anderson, county deputy district attorney. "We look at the person's background and the property taken and its value to arrive at a decision."

"Most stores insist on prosecution, but there's a lot of 'clean' people who we see," he said. "The bulk of thefts are individuals making snap decisions. If people know

about security and penalties, maybe they'll think about stealing a \$2 item which will cost them a \$60 fine and a police record."

Contractors are also cracking down on vandals and thieves. The Construction Industry Crime Prevention Program (CICPP) has rewarded many citizens with hard cash for reporting pilferage incidents.

The builders are being hurt as much as retail merchants in Sacramento by theft. One Sacramento builder said he could build two or three homes from the losses he suffers each year, estimated at \$45,000.

Merchants, contractors, police and the district attorney all say they need the public's help to get a good grip on the great rip-off. Justice is a many-sided coin, they say, and everyone shouldn't be afraid to be involved. And sometimes a case of good old-fashioned American blind justice can be a deterrent to theft.

"I observed an older couple come into the market," a security man said. "And they stuffed two home-permanent sets into one box. So I got my shopping cart and went out into the store."

"I took the empty box they left and went back into the stockroom and filled it with shredded cardboard, paper and wood chips. Then I found the couple intently hunched over the meat counter."

"While I was going by their cart, I switched cartons."

"It did me more good to think how they felt when they got home with that carton full of garbage than arresting them would've ever done."