

Soap Opera A Wash In New Ideas Washateria Provides Its Customers With 'Touches Of Home'



Photograph by Marvin

(L-R) Molly Swipas-Attendant at the Soap Opera hands Rowdy Gaines-Olympic Swimming Star his freshly dry-cleaned Olympic Jacket as Alicia Berger-Miss Nevada-U.S.A. looks on.

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and he intends to develop 25 more this year in Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas, he said.

'DOING A HANDSOME VOLUME'

"Everybody told me there was no way it would work," he said, but the "stores," as he calls them, are drawing customers by the thousands from many economic and social levels and are "doing a handsome volume."

He demurred when asked about profits, because he didn't want to "alert" Carson & Stevens' competition, but he said franchise operators, who have to invest about \$150,000, are "averaging better than a 26 per cent return on their investments."

The company helps each franchise owner with every aspect of setting up and operating, from helping choose the furniture and buy the machines and soap to training employees and helping with the bookkeeping. Chuck Linam of Magnolia, the secretary-treasurer of the company, who accompanied Camper to Las Vegas recently, said he helps managers in setting up books and keeping records.

The Soap Opera washateria has 43 washers and 22 dryers -- four washers and two dryers in each row. He said the layout provides customers more convenience because they don't have to "lug a lot of wash a long way from washer to dryer" and affords them more privacy so customer's clothes "aren't so much common property."

WASHERS 'BEST IN THE WORLD'

He does his biggest bragging, though, on the machines themselves. The washers, which include those that hold double and triple loads, are Swedish made -- Wascomat. He considers them "the best in the world" and said they've been used in the United States for years by nursing homes, hospitals and other institutions that have to do a lot of laundry, because they're "sturdier and harder working than American machines."

'EXTRACTING CYCLE'

He maintained they wash clothes cleaner because they have a much more vigorous "extracting cycle." He said because they take out much more of the water and the soap, the clothes last longer and require less drying.

The dryers are made by a Massachusetts company, the American Dryer Corporation, that makes only dryers, Stevens said, and are driven by small computers. Customers may press "HI temp," "LO temp," or "PermPress" for their choice of heat; red numbers show how much time is left.

Stevens said the dryers save energy by "recycling heat and giving the customers more heat for their money." It costs \$1.00 to operate a washer, 25 cents to operate a dryer, which provides 12 minutes of heat.

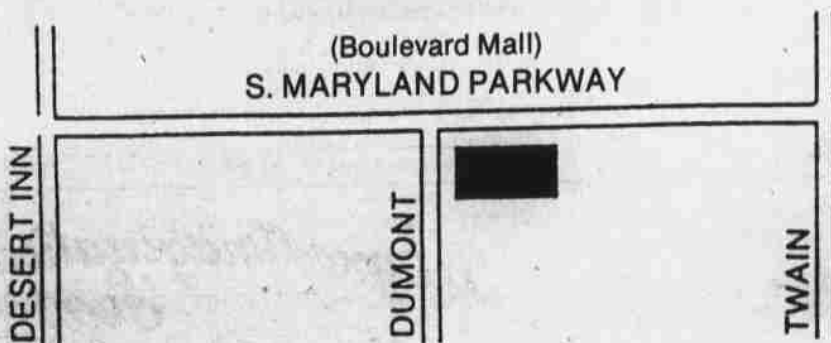
For those who find the chore too much, even in such surroundings as the Soap Opera, the Soap Opera offers a wash, dry and fold service - \$.75 per pound. The Soap Opera also offers professional

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