

Since we're neighbors let's be gamblers...

Quik Cash lure Eugene shoppers in latest capitalist ploy

It could be Las Vegas or Reno, or even Monte Carlo on any hot Saturday night. The bright lights, the bustling crowds, the large amounts of money changing hands; all could be seen in any casino at any given time.

It isn't Las Vegas, or Reno, or even Monte Carlo; it's a neighborhood grocery store on a Saturday morning. The bustling crowds aren't gambling, they're playing "Quik Cash," a game in which, if Gary Cook has his way about it, nobody really loses, and his grocery stores end up the winner.

Quik Cash began in Eugene Mayfair stores in April after Cook, the regional manager for Mayfair in

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Oregon and Washington (a division of Arden-Mayfair, a Delaware-based chain with 188 stores in five Western states), observed games in two other area stores and saw how successful they were. "I saw people playing the game and really having a good time, so I decided to look into getting a game for my stores," he said.

Games played by Albertson's, an Idaho-based grocery chain, and Fred Meyer Stores, a Portland-based variety store chain, caught Cook's attention and, after talking to people involved with the games, he began looking for a game of his own.

A nine-week search followed. Cook was looking for a special kind of game that would draw customers, be fun and easy to play and not hamper his stores' productivity. Certain kinds of games, such as punch-out tokens, can take a great deal of a cashier's time and not really be worth the extra effort needed to run them, he explained.

His search ended at a Los Angeles company headed by Walt Schaffer, a Ph.D. in marketing whose consulting firm has set up lotteries for several Midwestern and Eastern states.

Cook poured through information provided by Schaffer and decided on Quik Cash. A few federal regulations later, Mayfair customers began spelling O-N-E, F-I-V-E, H-U-N-D-R-E-D and T-H-O-U-S-A-N-D by erasing a gold dot in the center of a little green card combining the hidden letters into words.

Why the games? Cook likes to think of them in terms of selling shoes. "Some people will wear plain shoes and others want shoes with big clunky toes," he said. "So, if you sell the clunky-toes shoes you'll get those customers. What we want to do is augment the proposition we have given people with our groceries. We hope to have a little different mouse-trap," Cook said.

Success of the game can't be measured as yet, Cook explained. "It isn't a question you can answer by being half-pregnant," he said.

Albertson's, which played a Bingo game from January until April awarded almost \$92,000 in prizes. According to Les Taylor, district manager for

Albertson's Oregon stores, the Bingo game was successful as a promotional tool.

In terms of participation, Mayfair's game has so far been successful. Customer counts in the five Eugene-Springfield stores have increased, Cook explained, but sales and profits have stayed roughly the same. "It really comes down to the question of whether you would rather have 1,000 people spend one dollar apiece in your store a week or 200 people spend five dollars apiece a week in your store," he said.

It is normal, Cook explained, for weekly transactions to decrease while customers increase in stores playing these games. "What we're looking for in this game is some long-range consequences," he said. "When the game is played, the money is coming in and that has increased our sales for April over what it was last year. We have some older stores that we hope will have some sales increases and get them into the black."

With prizes ranging from \$1 to \$1,000 given away almost every week, Cook has reduced television, radio and newspaper advertising to pay for the game, which is a marketing tool in itself, he explained.

Several restrictions have been placed on the handling of the game by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). After the winning odds were computed (a weekly requirement) and filed with the FTC, the Quik Cash cards were shipped in sealed boxes of 10,000 cards each to Cook's office on West 7th Street. Specially treated to foil forgery, the total 1.7 million cards were then distributed by hand to the 16 Mayfair and Savon stores in Oregon, to be handed to customers by store cashiers.

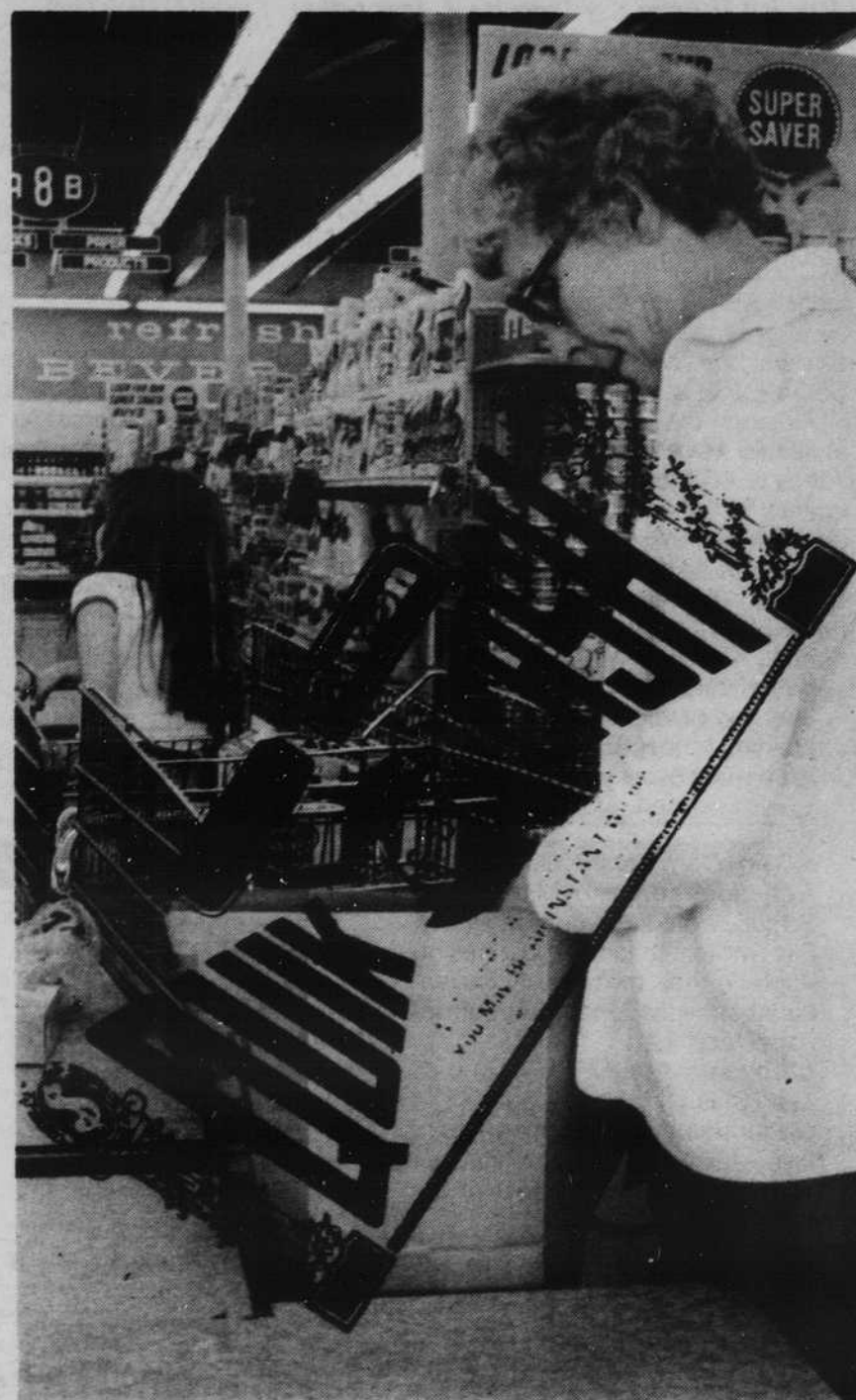
As of the second week of May there were 3,319 Quik Cash winners (almost 3,000 of those were \$1 winners), representing a total of \$9,783 worth of prizes. Tallies for winners since that time have yet to be published.

In the Eugene-Springfield area nine people have won \$100 prizes and four have won \$1,000 prizes. William Sims, a student working on his doctorate in comparative literature, won \$1,000 after only five visits to a Mayfair store. "I've shopped at Mayfair for a long time but I just ignored the games for about a month," Sims said. "Then I decided, oh-what-the-hell, and started playing." Out of sheer boredom, Sims began compiling cards and, after his cards spelled "thousand," he checked the dictionary to be certain.

Winning, Cook explained, is not the most important aspect of Quik Cash. "There are certain people who are really interested and will play diligently, but no one has been hurt by it," he said.

Sims, however, has had a different experience since winning. "I've talked with a number of casual acquaintances about the game and my winning so much money and they seem to be angry because I had won," he said. "They almost seem to be saying

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