

Cuddly ET dolls sell red hot

TORRANCE, Calif. (AP) — Bouquets of flowers, bribes and threats are the stuff of Astrid Kamar's Christmas season. She is president of the company with exclusive rights to make "E.T." dolls — and some retailers are desperate for extra extra-terrestrials.

"The pressure has been incredible," Kamar said. "I've been around for 25 years and I have never been offered bribes before. I have never received flowers or been taken to dinner by customers before. Usually, I take them."

Kamar International Inc. is the sole licensee for making the stuffed toys, which are based on the title character in the smash Steven Spielberg film, "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial." Even with 45 factories in Korea and Taiwan working overtime, Kamar can't keep up with demand. Kamar has turned to air freight to try to meet orders.

"Of course, if a shipment misses the plane they get nasty," Kamar said. "And it's getting nastier as it goes along. If we deliver to one store and not the one next door, we get the president and chairman of the board on the phone."

The phenomenon has created a monumental headache for Kamar, 48, and her 59-year-old husband, Pascal, who adapted the "E.T." design to five doll figures the firm already sold.

"Most of my day is consumed by the problem of counterfeits and knockoffs," Kamar said in an interview at company headquarters in this Los Angeles suburb, where

staffers answer the phone, "Kamar International, home of 'E.T.'"

Knockoffs, or product imitations with slight variations built in to circumvent the copyright, are common in the toy business. But Kamar said the hot-selling little alien may have sparked a first: dolls copied right down to the stolen Kamar label.

"I think this is the first time there has been a counterfeit toy on the market," she said. "Jeans and watches, yes, but toys? But there are so many people who want to get in and get out and make a quick buck. And they are using our tags and our labels, so that Customs assumes it's Kamar and it goes on through."

Alarmed by the ingenuity of its imitators, Kamar earlier this year bought full-page newspaper ads warning unauthorized manufacturers they would be prosecuted. So far, Kamar said, attorneys have identified 300 firms making illicit "E.T.s" and obtained 35 injunctions with more in the works.

Kamar, which expects to sell 10 million of its dolls by Christmas, stopped taking orders from U.S. retailers two months ago. But it expects even bigger sales internationally as the movie, which has already grossed more than \$300 million in the U.S., begins to pack foreign theaters.

Kamar doesn't expect sales to drop off, even after Christmas.

"Everybody loves it. We have letters from people who want to marry 'E.T.'" she said. "I think 'E.T.' is going to be around for a long time. It's the Teddy Bear of the future."

Congress looks at MX, gas, jobs

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite talk of compromise on the MX missile controversy, it is becoming increasingly unlikely that Congress will wind up its lame-duck session as scheduled on Friday.

Such troublespots as the gas tax, an emergency jobs bill and the battle over the missile Pres. Ronald Reagan dubbed the "Peacekeeper," may keep the lawmakers in session through next week or even after Christmas.

And Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kan., indicated Sunday the gas tax issue alone would keep Congress busy until New Year's Eve.

Early in the week, the House is expected to begin action on a stopgap spending measure that includes a \$5.4 billion Democratic jobs bill which

Republicans say will prompt a presidential veto.

The House Appropriations Committee affixed the jobs plan to the catch-all spending bill on Friday by a vote of 25-18, in a move by Democratic leaders to improve the chances of the jobs measure.

The Democratic plan would provide money for a variety of emergency public works jobs, plus housing aid and assistance for the unemployed, including food and shelter. Democrats say it could provide work for 300,000 people.

Today in the Senate, an effort is scheduled to choke off a filibuster by conservative Republicans that is stalling action on the proposed nickel-a-gallon increase in the 4-cent federal gasoline tax.


Aides to the Senate Repub-

lican leadership said Majority Leader Howard Baker, R-Tenn., would have more than the 60 votes needed to pass his closure motion to shut off debate on the gas tax increase.

The legislation is supposed to raise an estimated \$5.5 billion a year for highway and mass transit improvement.

Reagan is pushing the tax increase. Opponents argue it would depress the private economy by making consumers pay more for gasoline.

A \$231 billion defense spending bill, a peacetime record, also awaits Senate action. The House approved it after stripping out nearly \$1 billion to buy the first five of the MX missiles Reagan has proposed putting into the cluster called "dense pack" near Cheyenne, Wyo.



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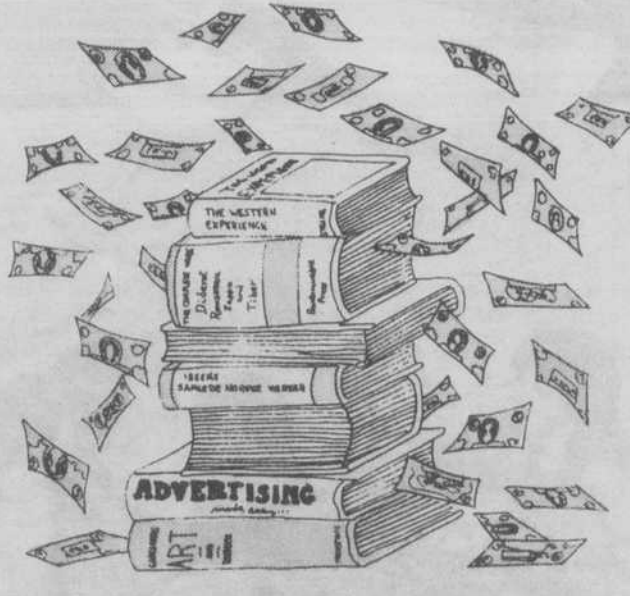
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