

Air Cooler Sales Aim At Record

By WALTER BURGHEWITZ

NEW YORK, April 20 (AP)—Will it be a fall vacation in Florida, a trip to the sunny Caribbean or a grand tour of Rome, Madrid and Paris?

That's the question retailers who sell a leading air conditioner pondered this week as they stocked up on inventories for the coming hot weather business.

They could earn the Florida trip by placing a small order for conditioners, the Caribbean junket with a medium-sized order, and the European tour by going whole hog.

This was just one of several incentives being offered to appliance dealers to push pre-season orders of air conditioners. Other firms featured trips as prizes and some gave cash discounts.

What does this mean to you, the consumer?

Year-Round Sales Sought

It means that the manufacturers and big distributors are betting you and your neighbors will turn more and more to air coolers for when summer heat arrives. And they're out to see that your neighborhood dealer has a sizable inventory on hand when you do get the urge to shop for a cooler.

Manufacturers and distributors also have this objective for pre-season promotions — they are trying to educate dealers to the idea air conditioning can be sold on a year-round basis, and not just during the hot months.

Despite tremendous ups and downs in the market in the last 10 years, sales of room air conditioners have increased in each year. What was a 10 million dollar business in 1946 has grown into a one-half billion dollar industry.

8 Millions in '57 Possible

Forecasts of 1957 sales of room air conditioners range all the way from 1,500,000 to 2,500,000 units. Most industry leaders are confident volume will set a record high, regardless of the weather.

In Springfield, Mass., W. C. Paulson, manager of the room air conditioner department for Westinghouse Electric Corp., says, "We expect a sales increase of 30 to 35 per cent over 1956. First quarter shipments to dealers are considerably ahead of last year."

In Syracuse, N.Y., Cloud Wampler, chairman of Carrier Corp., says industry sales of the more expensive central air conditioning units should rise more than 40 per cent from last year's 175,000 to 250,000. Many of the central conditioners are going into newly constructed homes.

It's estimated room conditioners retailed last year at an average price of \$275 compared with \$200 per unit in 1955. The drop was blamed largely in price-cutting in some Eastern cities where stores overstocked during the severe but brief heat in June, 1956.

The industry is going all-out to avert a recurrence of this dumping during the coming summer. Some companies give dealers a "buy back offer." They agree to buy back a substantial part of an order if the dealer is stuck with inventories on hand at summer's end.

Show Altered Each Night By Bea Lillie

By WILLIAM GLOVER

New York, April 20 (AP)—When Bea Lillie goes into her star act these evenings on Broadway she is never quiet certain what will happen.

Both she and the audience keep changing her material.

"It's quite an adventure," remarks the renowned comedienne.

Miss Lillie is the big headliner of the "Ziegfeld Follies," and her flair for unpredictability is helping make the Winter Garden get no-no notices. Auntie Bea as usual elicited only superlatives, and as a veteran trouper she's been busy ever since.

"I never really did believe in a set pattern," she explains, and I change bits and pieces each performance. Take for example that lobster — I'm giving it a complete manicure now."

Lobster, Asparagus Props

The crustacean, it should be explained, is a prop in a Lillie favorite hilarity, a speechless sketch entitled "Mildred Dines Alone." The zany manicure is performed with a stalk of limp asparagus. The idea just came to her one evening at performance time.

At another moment of the show Miss Lillie and Billy DeWolfe indulge in tete-a-tete during which, the lady discloses, neither is sure of what the other will say next. She feels it keeps them both up on their points of humor.

However, it is her excursion out over the audience which gives Miss Lillie her chief adlib workout.

Everything Happens

Clothed in fro-tou costume and safety-belted at the end of a crane, the star sweeps out from the stage, singing and tossing garters to the assemblage.

"I'm never sure what's going to happen, or when, if ever, I'll get back to the stage," she admits. "But certainly helps keep the audience awake."

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