

# BUSINESS

STOCKS THE BRIEFCASE

## Up 27.12

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 27.12 to 4668.67. Advancing issues outnumbered declines by about 7 to 4 on the New York Stock Exchange, with 1,451 up, 832 down and 711 unchanged. Big Board volume totaled 315.12 million shares.

The NYSE's composite index rose 1.32 to 297.99. The Standard & Poor's 500-stock index rose 3.01 to 556.63. The Nasdaq composite index climbed 14.56 to 976.33. At the American Stock Exchange, the market value index added 1.61, rising to 516.16.

## Bed & Back feels no pain with growth

Furniture shop owner working to ease aches for customers

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Journal staff writer

Joanne Schatz is not the kind of person who's likely to be found lying down on the job — though as the owner of Joanne's Bed & Back Shops, she has ample opportunities.

The Bethesda resident is in one of her five stores every day of the week, urging people to sit in chairs and lie in beds to see just how comfortable her products feel.

"She's extremely dynamic and I think she's a visionary," said Anita Glick, a customer since the 1970s. "She knows her products, she's enthusiastic about them and what she does, and it comes across."

While Schatz's voice and face are familiar to many people because of her radio and television commercials, many of her new customers are shocked to see her in her stores, she said.

"I like to treat people like they're coming into my home," she said. "People can't believe I actually work. They think all I do is make commercials."

Schatz began selling adjustable beds for people with back problems in the 1970s, long before they were commonly available on the East Coast.

Her Beltsville-based business, which started in the garage of her Bethesda home, has grown into a five-store chain and is in the process of franchising.

Schatz started her business, originally called The Adjustable Bed Co., after she was thrust into the workforce after a divorce.

With four children, she took a job working for an orthopedic surgeon, where she saw people's needs for nonhospital-type adjustable beds.

After borrowing \$15,000 against her mortgage, she opened a small store in Bethesda. Because she had to sell at least 20 adjustable beds per month to pay her bills, she put in 70- to 80-hour weeks at the store, she said.



Joanne Schatz, owner of Joanne's Bed & Back Shops, caters to those with back pain.

Jeff Taylor/Journal

"My anxiety was so high, I threw up every day for two years," she said.

It wasn't until the late 1980s, when the public began paying more attention to health and fitness that the business really took off.

"The first 10 years were hard," said Schatz, 57. "I had 10 years just driving upstream."

Increasing awareness of workplace health problems such as carpal tunnel syndrome and stricter enforcement of laws that require em-

ployers to provide a proper work environment helped the business grow.

The Bed & Back chain also works with insurance companies on worker's compensation claims to provide furniture that will speed injured employees' recoveries.

Last year, her five stores generated revenues of \$3.8 million, said her husband and business partner, Skip Schatz. The Rockville Pike store is the highest-selling shop, he said.

Schatz is in the process of franchising in the New York area and is

considering going national.

"I never expected this," Schatz said. "It really baffles my mind. I just wanted to make a living."

Over the years, Schatz has expanded her company's offerings to include a full line of furniture and smaller products such as pillows that help people with back problems. Her customers range from thirtysomethings who want to prevent bad backs to people with spinal cord injuries.

Many of the products look just like what one would find in a mainstream

furniture store.

Some are designed especially for the short, tall or obese. There's a leather chair that keeps the body in a 90-degree angle at all times. Another chair gives a heat and body massage.

Because of the Simpson trial, the office chair like the one Judge Lance Ito uses has become a hot seller, Schatz said. Sales of the product have increased by 42 percent.

"The phone was ringing off of the hook with people asking if we had the chair like Judge Ito," she said.