

Households reflecting current fashion trends

The energy shortage may not necessarily mean that color selection in carpet will be any less than what it has been in recent years. It also may not necessarily mean that deliveries of carpet will take any longer than what the American homemaker has become used to.

Both predictions come from Ian McMeekin, designer for Burlington House Carpets, who added qualifications to each statement.

To put the question in context, it should be recognized that 96% of all carpet manufactured in the United States is made of synthetic fibers, which are derived from petrochemicals that are dependent on supplies of raw petroleum feedstocks. So, if people are running out of gas on the expressway, carpet mills are also running short of nylon and polyester, two of the most in-demand man-made fibers that are used in carpets.

As a designer for a division of the world's largest carpet manufacturing company, Mr. McMeekin was asked how consumers would feel the effects of the fiber shortage. Would prices go higher? Would carpet still be available in literally hundreds of colors? Would the shortage slow the pace of technical advance that in the past few seasons has produced TAK-dyeing, continuous dyeing, and the cut-and-loop shag? How long would a consumer have to wait for delivery of carpet after she selects it in the store?

"Carpet mills—based on how secure they are about their supply of fiber—will make the decision to shorten color lines or not," Mr. McMeekin said. "A company that finds itself in short supply will not stop making carpet in greens and golds or rusts, which are very popular.

In addition, we are adding new colors that are fresh, original accents, like suede, ruby, and lemon chiffon.

"Prices will probably climb later in the year as cost increases are passed on. But right now, carpet is a bargain for the consumer. It's one of the few things I can think of that is selling for 1954 prices," the designer said.

On the subject of innovation in design, Mr. McMeekin said that the shortage would force carpet mills to broaden their search for new materials and new methods of manufacturing.

"This is no time to produce look-alike carpets," he said. "Carpet is a fashion business and consum-

ers shopping for carpet this season will see the results of some genuine and significant technical advances, some of which have come as recently as four months ago. Prints that can't be told from woven Axminsters and increasingly sophisticated color plants are things to look for."

On the subject of deliveries, Mr. McMeekin had this word of advice for consumers:

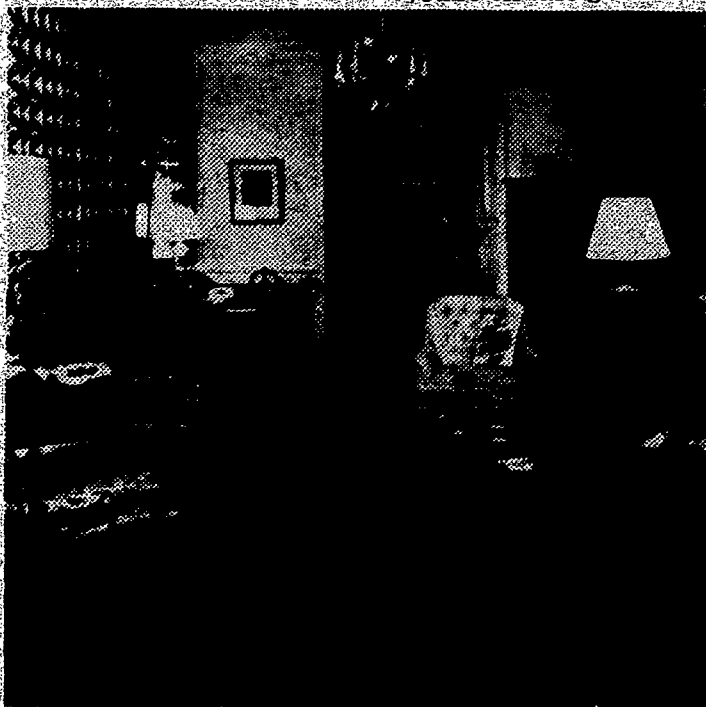
"When picking a carpet in the store, ask where the carpet is in stock. If the retail store has it in the store's own warehouse or if the carpet is in stock at the warehouse of a distributor located nearby, you're on safe ground. De-

livery should be within the week."

The Burlington House designer also offered this tip on "how-to-buy" for homemakers shopping for carpet this season.

"Take a careful look at the sample in the store," he said. "Look especially

hard at the construction of the yarn. If two ends are plied together and the yarn is twisted, that's an indication of good quality. Plied, twisted yarn gives better performance, and carpets which are made this way will keep their good looks longer."



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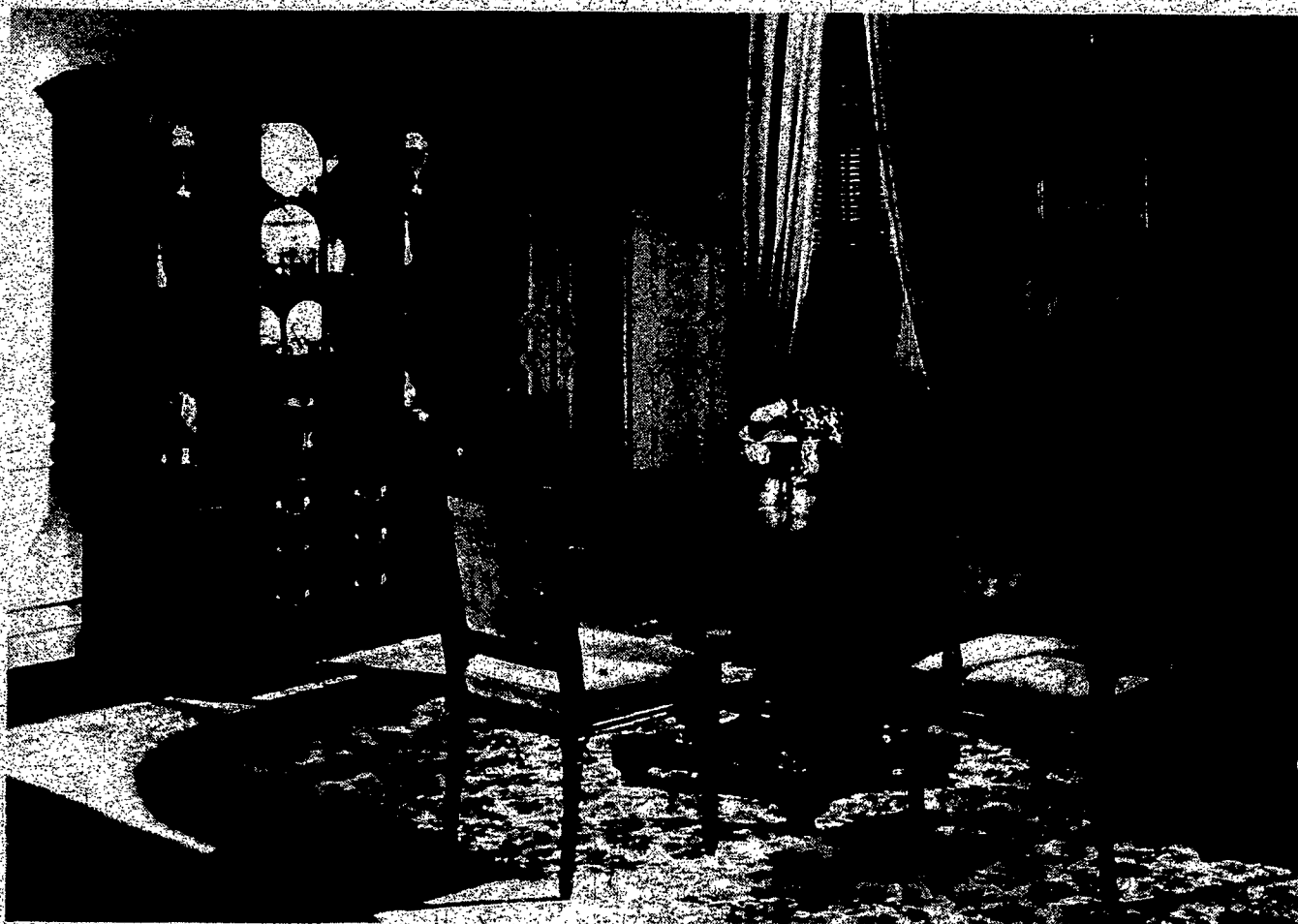
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