

SCREEN

New walls hold up Homemaker spots

Very few people would argue the point that “if it ain’t broke, you can still freshen it up a bit.”

Homemakers Furniture producer Shirley Feldmann applied the modified adage by reinventing some of the local dealer spots that have sold home furnishings successfully for decades.

Breaking May 1 will be Homemakers’ first spot ever with fully animated characters (although Homemaker’s John M. Smyth has been smiling through photo manipulation at the end of standard Homemaker spots for years). StarToons created the animated characters of “Wally and Wanda Wall” from rough drawings presented by Feldmann.

Working as associate producer for the Homemaker spots for over six years, Feldmann became primary Homemaker producer after the death last fall of Paul Robinson. Robinson had handled the account for the majority of its broadcast life for 30 years. Perhaps with Robinson’s absence, it seemed like an appropriate time to change the spot format; Feldmann says the animation was chosen to enliven one of the store’s most successful promo spots to date.

Other factors surrounding Homemakers have changed, too. In 1994, the John M. Smyth Company was bought out by Levitz Furniture Company when Levitz became a holding company. Feldmann also hired new writers Jim Ardito and Rich Goodman in April to script the broadcast spots. The copy job was formerly handled by Empire Carpet man Lynn Haldren during most of Robinson’s tenure.



StarToons created Wally and Wanda Wall who crack up while flanking John M. Smyth Homemakers’ live spokeswoman Susie Keller.

“We decided to bring the spots more into a ‘90s feel,” Feldmann said of the change. “The Wall-to-Wall sale spot is one of the most successful, so we didn’t want to retire the concept completely, just freshen it up.”

Feldmann had more than the change in appearance to deal with regarding the Homemaker account, and in a short amount of time. She was asked to produce seven new TV and three new radio spots in three weeks, which meant grooming the new writers to the account quickly. To top it off, Editel, Homemakers post house, closed. Post Effects filled the gap, but

the complication didn’t lengthen Feldmann’s deadline.

The budget for the refinished campaign was quite healthy, Feldmann said, based on its overall cost effectiveness. “The up front money was pretty good because the client knew we could use them many times a year. That helped them stomach the amount.”

Tom Test and Spider Saloff were cast as Wally and Wanda Wall, respectively. The on-camera talent of Susie Keller remains the same.

Feldmann’s Flicks is located at 1601 W. School, #609, 60657; phone, 348-0742; fax, 348-0799.—Lisa Hemminger ★