



evening courses at Northwestern

There is no such thing as a typical School of Continuing Studies (SCS) student. No single age group, industry, education level, neighborhood, or background characterizes our students. What they do have in common is a desire to reach their personal and professional goals. What we promise is a plan for getting there. In addition to our degree and certificate programs, SCS allows students to take individual courses for career development, personal enrichment, and as preparation for graduate study. Visit our web site for a complete list of evening courses offered on our Evanston and Chicago campuses.

"I can take classes when I want and as I want, culminating in a degree. That's not possible at other schools."

— Genevieve Pham-Kanter,
Bachelor's degree candidate,
philosophy major

There's still time to register!

Classes begin January 3



312-503-4683
www.scs.northwestern.edu

NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

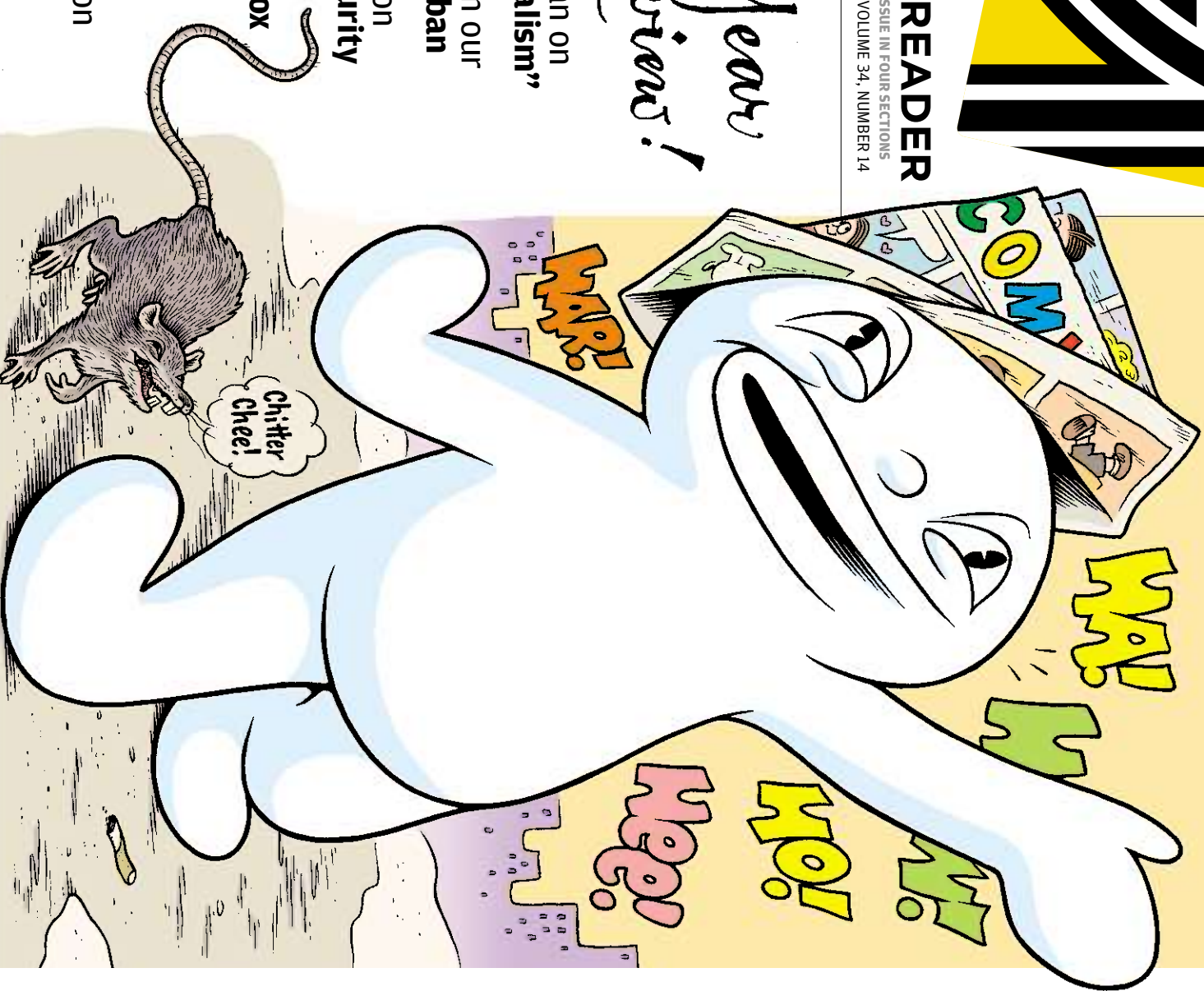
SCHOOL OF
CONTINUING
STUDIES



CHICAGO READER
CHICAGO'S FREE WEEKLY | THIS ISSUE IN FOUR SECTIONS
FRIDAY, DEC 30, 2005 | VOLUME 34, NUMBER 14

*The Year
in Reviews!*

- Michael Lenehan on "citizen journalism"
- Ben Joravsky on our lame **smoking ban**
- Michael Miner on **homeland security**
- Ted Cox on the **Cubs and the Sox**
- Bob Mehr on the **RIAA's latest victory**
- Liz Armstrong on **Liz Armstrong**



Our annual
COMICS
SPECIAL starts on page 11

PLUS The granddaddy of the graphic novel, a showcase for sustainable art, Chicago SketchFest starts, where to eat after midnight, and more

Section One



December 30, 2005

Letters 3

Columns

Hot Type 4

Did somebody say something about homeland security failing?

The Straight Dope 5

Traveling cargo class?

The Works 8

What's being "compromised" by the smoking ban

Chicago Antisocial 10

No regrets

The Sports Section 24

Let's hear it for putting the suspense back in baseball

Pullout

Comics Special 11

New work by Ivan Brunetti, Mark Fischer and Rob Syers, Steve Krakow, Paul Hornschemeier, Onsmith, Jeffrey Brown, John Hankiewicz, and more

Reviews

Art 28

"Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art" at the Smart Museum

Books 30

The Contract With God Trilogy by Will Eisner

Plus

Ink Well

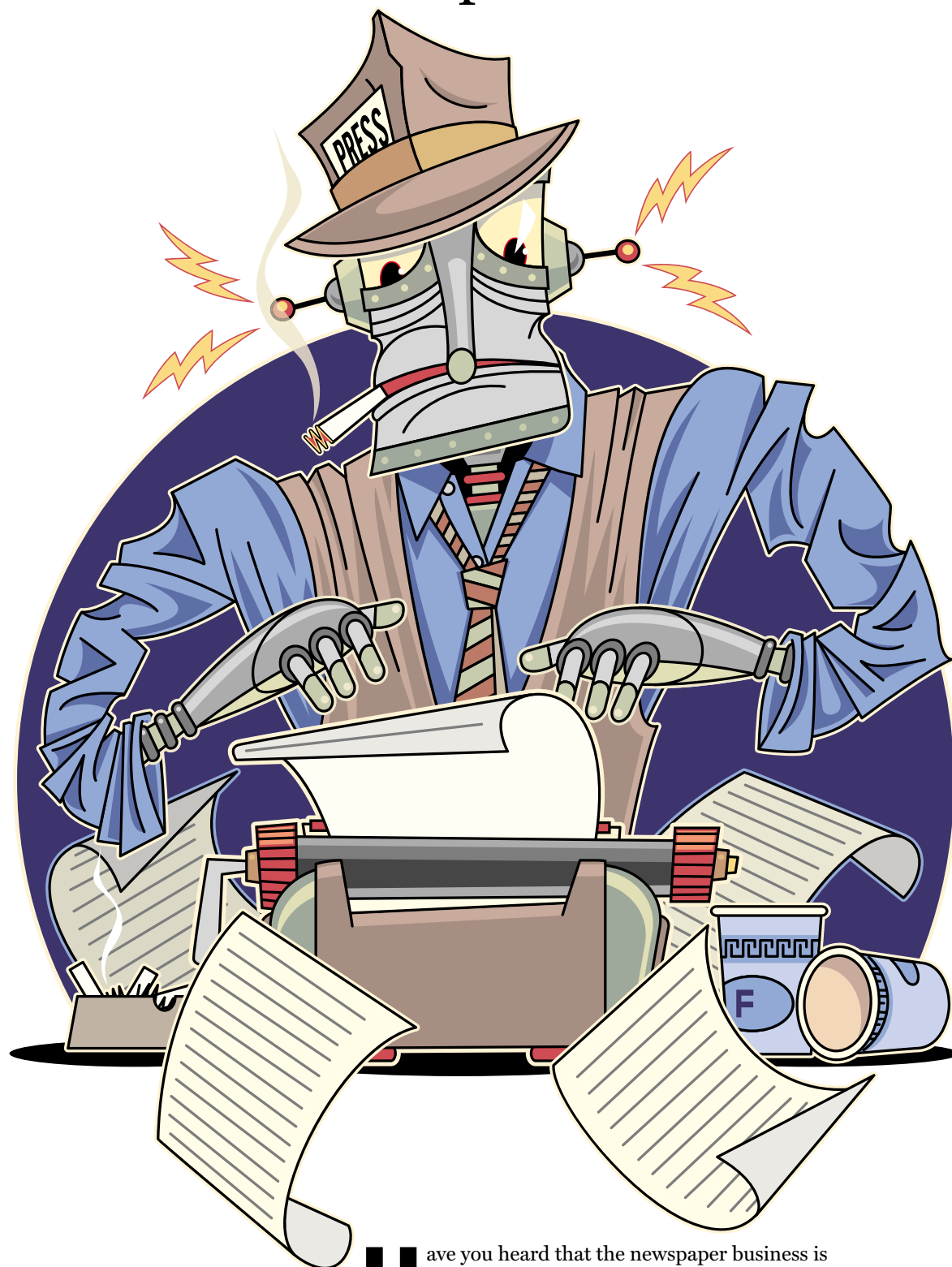
This week's crossword: Sounds Like Love

ON THE COVER: ARCHER PREWITT

Modest Proposals

A Year Without Journalism

Let's see what our brave new media future looks like when there are no real reporters to steal from.



MARK S. FISHER

By Michael Lenehan

Have you heard that the newspaper business is going to hell? It's in all the papers, but nobody reads the papers anymore so you might have missed the news. Assuming you still care about news, which you don't, according to the papers.

Circulation's down, ad revenue's down, jobs are vanishing everywhere you look. A few weeks ago the Tribune Company capped a series of buyouts and layoffs by spiking the New City News Service, formerly the City News Bureau, the venerable Chicago institution that used to train the journalists of the future. Evidently it's not needed

continued on page 26

A Year Without Journalism

continued from page 1

any more because journalism doesn't have a future.

Who's to blame for all this? Mostly Craig Newmark, the geek who started Craigslist ten years ago as an e-mail guide to "cool events" in the Bay Area. Now, with just 18 employees—fewer people than it takes to deliver the *Reader* every Thursday—Craigslist is a global juggernaut sucking up millions of dollars that used to go to newspaper classifieds. According to one much-repeated estimate, it cost daily papers in San Francisco alone about \$50 million last year.

But Craig is not the only culprit. There's also eBay, which has siphoned off who knows how

many more millions of dollars by making camera-for-sale ads obsolete. And Google, which has rocked the advertising world by delivering ads to people who might actually want to see them. And online journals like Slate and Salon, and Yahoo and Microsoft, which lurk behind their mountains of cash waiting to spring out and copy anything that works for Google or eBay. And Wonkette and InstaPundit and the Decembrist and all their blogging friends whose idea of a good time is giving yourself a funny name and distracting normal people who used to read newspapers.

And of course there are the newspapers themselves, which, back in the days of Internet

Bubble #1, in their desperation to maintain "mindshare" trained readers to look for their news online, for free, rather than on newsprint spread out on the kitchen table, as God intended.

Hardly a day goes by, it seems, without some Web behemoth announcing a major new initiative to suck the lifeblood out of the news business. Of course it's not their intent to destroy journalism, or to bankrupt companies that employ thousands of decent, hardworking taxpayers, or to force the teenage daughters of reporters and editors into lives of prostitution. They're just trying to make a better world.

Last month, when Google introduced Google Base, they

presented it as a service that allows people to post "all types" of information online and assign "attributes" to it that will make it easy to find. For example, you can post Grandma's chicken and dumplings recipe and assign to it such database attributes as "recipes," "chicken," "American," and "traditional"; these become categories that searchers can use to find the recipe. Neato.

What Google did not say, but weary newspaper people were quick to notice, is that you can also post a description and some pictures of your apartment on Dayton Street and assign to it such attributes as "Apartments," "Chicago," "Lincoln Park," "two-bedroom," "\$1,400." And if you happen to run a rental agency and have hundreds of apartments to list, and if you happen to know how to put them in a database or have a sixth grader at home who can do it for you, Google Base gives you a way to upload your "items" (please don't call them classified ads) in bulk. Just in case Craigslist is not easy or free enough for you.

Craig, too, is also bent on making a better world. And now that he has done so for job seekers, apartment hunters, and sexual predators, he's turning to journalism. Just before Thanksgiving he let it be known that he's involved in an online project that will use the same "wisdom of the masses" approach that informs Craigslist. He's being coy about the details, but he has dropped phrases like "citizen journalism," "networks of trust," and "reputation mechanisms," suggesting that he's talking about a cross between Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia edited by its readers, and Google News, which boasts of presenting "the most relevant news first" by compiling reports from more than 4,500 sources "solely by computer algorithms, without human intervention."

The day after Craig first talked publicly about his new project, I noticed the lead item on Wonkette, about an announcement that Dick Cheney would appear at a fund-raiser for beleaguered congressman Tom DeLay. I noticed that, according to Wonkette, the news story that inspired her fulminations ("Evidently the more event-appropriate MC team of Jack Abramoff and Duke Cunningham is already booked for that night") had come from Yahoo, via Splid. In other words Wonkette, whose blog is owned by Gawker Media, spotted this news on another blog owned by Gawker Media, whose writer had spotted it on Yahoo. Nowhere does Wonkette betray even the vaguest awareness of the person who actually reported that story or even the "mainstream media" that disseminated it. The Yahoo story came from the Associated Press, which had picked it up from the *Houston Chronicle*. For the record, the *Chronicle* story was written by a Washington

bureau reporter named Samantha Levine. But as far as Wonkette was concerned, it came from Yahoo, via Splid. That's the way it works in the blogosphere. The stories are just . . . out there.

That item about Cheney and DeLay remained at the top of Wonkette for five days, thanks to the long Thanksgiving weekend. Wonkette doesn't do weekends.

A couple days earlier, David Carr's column in the *New York Times* told of a "plague week" in the newspaper business, a gruesome series of layoffs, ethical questions, and technology-induced travails including Google Base (but not Craig's foray into citizen journalism, which was yet to be announced). At the end Carr reminded his readers of the gaping void at the bottom of our brave new media future. "For Google's news aggregator to function, somebody has to do the reporting, to make the calls. . . . News robots can't meet with a secret source in an underground garage or pull back the blankets on a third-rate burglary to reveal a conspiracy at the highest reaches of government." And, I would add, you can't rely on bloggers to do it, because something might happen over Thanksgiving weekend.

"Tactical and ethical blunders aside," Carr concluded, "actual journalists come in handy on occasion."

I think it's time for actual journalists to drive this point home. Today, therefore, I am proposing a yearlong journalism strike. I am urging reporters and editors around the world to put down their notebooks, close their laptops, hang up their phones. Lie down and be counted! Let's have no reporting, no editing, no application of any human intelligence whatsoever to events public or private till January 1, 2007. I'm calling it the Year Without Journalism. Let's all relax, let go, and float blissfully in the information-free state (excuse me, I mean free-information state) that our public awaits so eagerly. Let one of those news robots handle the hired truck scandal and further crimes of the Daley administration. Let's see if Wonkette can deal with the deviant bastards in the executive branch any better than Judith Miller did. Let's have some of those citizen journalists call Burt Natarus and see if they can figure out what the hell he's talking about. With no news to aggregate, no facts to ruminate, the algorithms and the bedroom pundits will turn on each other like mirrors, producing a perfect regression of narcissistic self-reflection, repeating endlessly, adding nothing, ever shrinking, ad infinitum.

Meanwhile our beaten-down journalists will get a much-needed year of rest and relaxation. Or maybe some time to learn a new skill, like computer programming. **G**

What are you waiting for? Learn to write with confidence.

The Feltre School is Chicago's premier institution for learning English grammar from a traditional approach.

We'll not only teach you the *rules* of good writing, we'll also teach you *the reasons behind the rules*.

Our classes are perfect for those who wish to write clearly, confidently, and concisely.



*Practical
Rigorous
Effective*

January 9 book discussion:

Huckleberry Finn
by
Mark Twain

See the entire reading list for 2006 at our website -- www.feltre.org



Convenient schedules and location.
Traditional, proven curriculum.
Excellent, experienced teachers.
Small classes in a friendly setting.
On-site classes for groups of 10 or more.
Tuition assistance for full-time teachers.



A thoughtful place for thinking people.

In addition to our intensive grammar reviews, our winter 2006 term includes:

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
Introduction to Classical Latin
Public Speaking
Logic
Plato's *Republic*
Shakespearean Tragedy



The FELTRE SCHOOL
22 West Erie Street, Chicago
312.255.1133 www.feltre.org

Discount
RATES
without discount
SERVICE.



It's no accident more people trust State Farm to insure their cars. Call today.

Linda Kuczka, Agent
1015 W Webster Ave
Chicago, IL 60614
Bus: 773-975-9111
linda.kuczka.bz97@statefarm.com



Providing Insurance and Financial Services

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company (Not in NJ), Bloomington, IL P040034 12/04

Real Estate Closings from \$300

Divorce from \$399

Bankruptcy Fee \$550 (Chapter 7)

Living Will for \$199

Shaw Legal Services, LTD

We keep it simple

Other services at flat rates available. Just ask.

773-549-9500

608 W. Briar Pl, Chicago

773-975-9400

2451 W. Lincoln Ave, Chicago

www.shawlegalservices.com

KÖHN'S

DRESS FOR LESS

CARHARTT COATS

\$49 ALL SIZES ALL COLORS AND UP (IRR.)

CARHARTT HOODIES

TO SIZE 5X ALL COLORS AND UP (IRR.) **\$25**

\$13 DICKIE PANTS (IRR.)

TO SIZE 72 ALL COLORS

\$11 MATCHING SHIRTS (IRR.)

\$39 HOTTEST JEANS BRANDS

GIRBAUD, ENYCE, ROCAWEAR SEAN JOHN, AKADEMIKS

Open 7 days 10am-6pm • Corner North-Austin 6004 W. North Ave, Chgo • 773-637-5175

Sealy Posturepedic

\$99 Twin Ea Pc Sealy Ballerina

Full 2 pc Set.....\$279
Queen 2pc Set.....\$299
King 3 pc set.....\$449

OPEN MONDAY, JANUARY 2

SUPPORT YOU TRUST. COMFORT YOU'LL LOVE™

Year End Clearance

All prices slashed!!
30%-60% off

WWW.MARJEN OFCHICAGO.COM

DESIGNER AREA RUGS

Authentic woven rugs in traditional and contemporary designs
100s TO CHOOSE FROM

\$79⁹⁵ - \$199⁹⁵

Lowest Prices Guaranteed Sizes: 5x8 and 8x11

FREE! DELIVERY (with the purchase of premium set)*
FREE! BED FRAME (with the purchase of premium set)*
FREE! SET-UP & REMOVAL (with the purchase of premium set)*

MATTRESS SETS		DELUXE EXTRA FIRM 7 year warranty compare at Our low price	
Twin sets	from \$84	Twin ea. pc.	\$99 \$69
Full Sets	from \$94	Full ea. pc.	\$129 \$84
Queen Set	from \$114	Queen Set	\$299 \$199
		King Set	\$419 \$299

\$448 TWIN SET...\$349 FULL SET...\$429 KING SET...\$699
\$588 TWIN SET...\$499 FULL SET...\$549 KING SET...\$899

QUEEN 2PC. SET

FUTON BLOWOUT!

Chicago's LARGEST and BEST selection of top quality FUTON FRAMES, MATTRESSES and COVERS at LOW, LOW PRICES - FUTON COVERS FROM \$25

BLACK METAL FUTON FRAME \$59
Full size futon mattress from \$59

TALIA SOFA BED \$199
was \$299
Your choice of color

QUEEN SLEIGH BED \$299
Solid Wood Construction Sells elsewhere \$599
\$788
Dresser, Mirror & Chest

MISSION STYLE OAK FUTON FRAME \$99
Reg. \$200
Lowest Price Ever

VIRGINIA FUTON FRAME \$169
Incredible value!
Heavy-duty solid Oak Mission Style
Reg. \$399
SPECIAL PURCHASE
Loveseat, Full or Queen Size

COCOA SOFA \$399
Reg. \$799
Easy to care for • Easy to clean
Easy to live with.
Matching loveseat, chaise and swivel rocking chair available

5 PIECE SOLID WOOD DINETTE \$149
TABLE + 4 CHAIRS W/ PADDED SEATS
Reg. \$249

CAPPUCCINO SET \$249
TABLE + 4 CHAIRS
Reg. \$399

MICROFIBER SOFA \$399
Durapella Stone
Reg. \$799

MATCHING LOVESEAT \$369

ASHLEY KHAKI SOFA \$298
Reg. \$499
Also available loveseat, oversized chair, ottoman and queen sleeper.

NATUZZI SOFAS \$599
FINE ITALIAN LEATHER FURNITURE
REGULAR \$1400 FROM

EUROPEAN SOFA SLEEPER \$349
WITH BUILT IN STORAGE COMPARTMENT
Reg. \$500

DURAHIDE BICAST BROWN SOFA \$399
Matching loveseat, chair, ottoman + Queen sleeper - are sale priced

MICROFIBER SOFA \$399
Durapella Stone
Reg. \$699

3 PC SET \$169
Solid Oak Mission Style
Reg. \$300
includes cocktail & 2 ends

MICRO FIBER 10 colors in stock

5 PC LIVING ROOM \$799
Reg. \$1399
incl. sofa, loveseat, cocktail table + 2 end tables

VINNIE STACKABLE SHELVES \$69
100% HARDWOOD
in 6 colors mahogany, cherry, pecan, rosewood, black

"VENECIA" BEDROOM \$499
Dresser, Mirror & Chest
Reg. \$899
Nightstand \$79
Queen Bed
Reg. \$399
\$199
Frosted glass door accent

MAR-JEN Discount Furniture and Bedding Super Store
1536 W. Devon Ave. • 773-338-6636
www.marjenofchicago.com

Free 90 day layaway plan

VISA MasterCard

DESIGNER RUGS 5x8 \$99 8x10 \$199

(6400 N. 1/2 blk. east of Clark St.) • Plenty of Parking
IMMEDIATE DELIVERY INCLUDING NIGHTS & WEEKENDS
Mon.-Thurs. 10:30-8; Tues., Wed. & Fri. 10:30-7; Sat. 10-6; Sun. 11-5.

Futon Mattresses and Frames • Mattress Sets • Sofas • Loveseats • Sleepers • Dinettes • Bedroom Sets • Wall Units • Bookcases • Student Desks
Computer Desks and Work Stations • Office Chairs • Desks • Entertainment Centers • Cocktail & End Tables • Bunk Beds • Daybeds • Lamps
Recliners • Formal Dining Room Sets • Leather Sofa Groups and Sectionals • Platform Beds • TV Carts • and much, much, more.