

Computer case choices

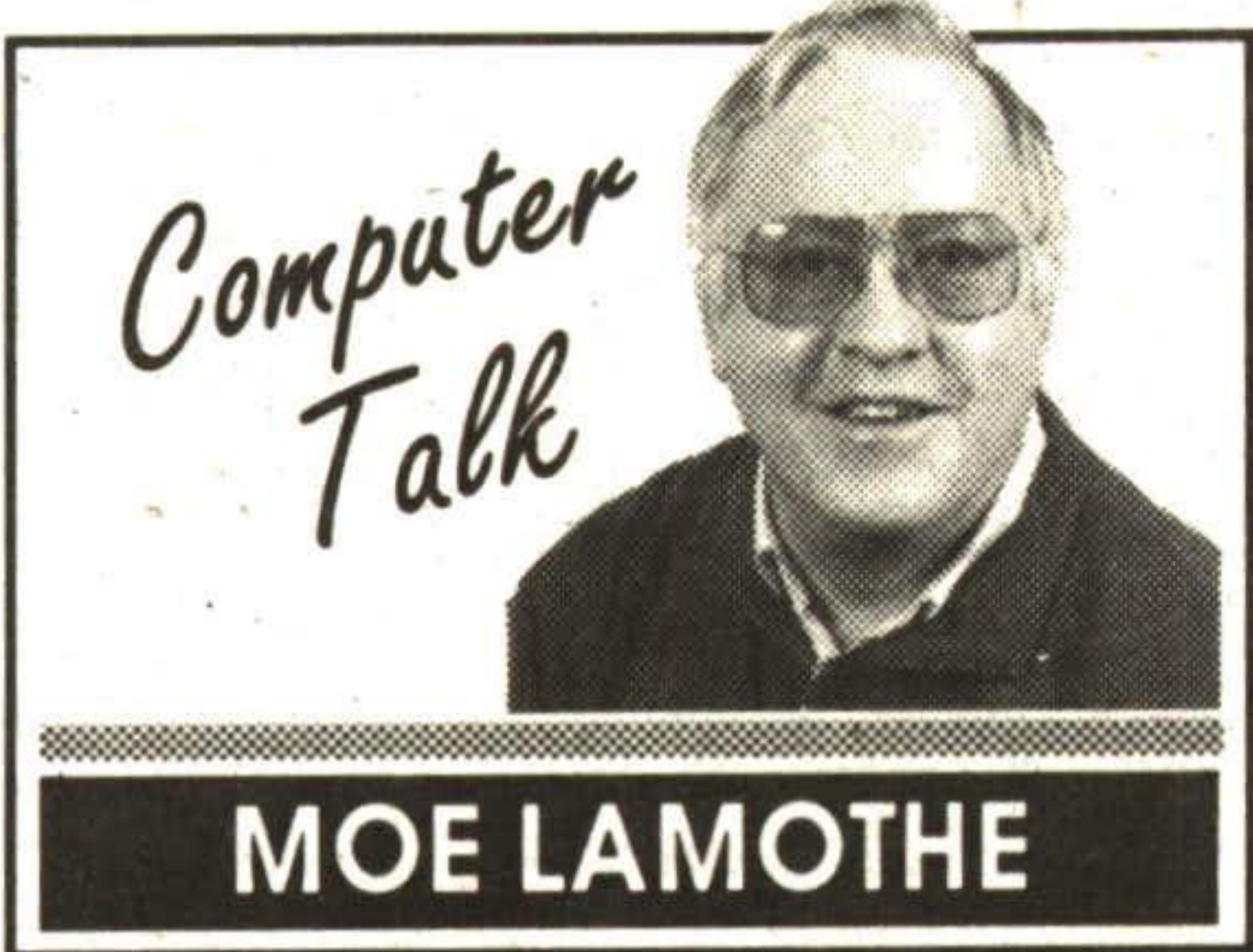
The first two articles in this series touched briefly on the components that make-up a DOS or Windows based computer and some of the decisions you need to make regarding use and software choices. In this article we will examine the choices available for the case and power supply of your basic computer.

Cases are usually available in desk top (full size or mini), mini-tower and full-tower. For most uses a full size desk top is your best choice. You can put your monitor on it and save some desk space. The mini-desk top is too small to allow for the easy addition of optional boards and the mini-tower takes up space beside your monitor unless you have space under your desk.

The computer cabinet should have at least four accessible drive openings — one small opening specifically designed for a 3.5 inch floppy and at least two 'half-height' openings. These are larger openings to be used for 5.25 inch floppy drive and a CD-ROM drive.

You may want a third 'half-height' opening to install an internal tape back-up drive. Even if you don't want all of these drives now, you may want to add them later. Remember, CPU upgrades can usually be accommodated in your existing case and power supply, possibly saving you the need to buy a complete new system in the future.

Some computer cases are starting to appear with built in stereo speakers that make it easier to setup a multimedia machine (one that has a CD-ROM and stereo sound capability). If you are planning to start with a multi-media machine and find one of these computer cases make sure that the speaker quality is adequate for your needs. Generally, you will be better off



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buying the speakers as part of your multi-media add-on kit. A 200 Watt power supply is more than adequate for a home or small business computer. The fans on most power supplies are quiet but if you are in an area where sound level is important, pay attention to the fan noise.

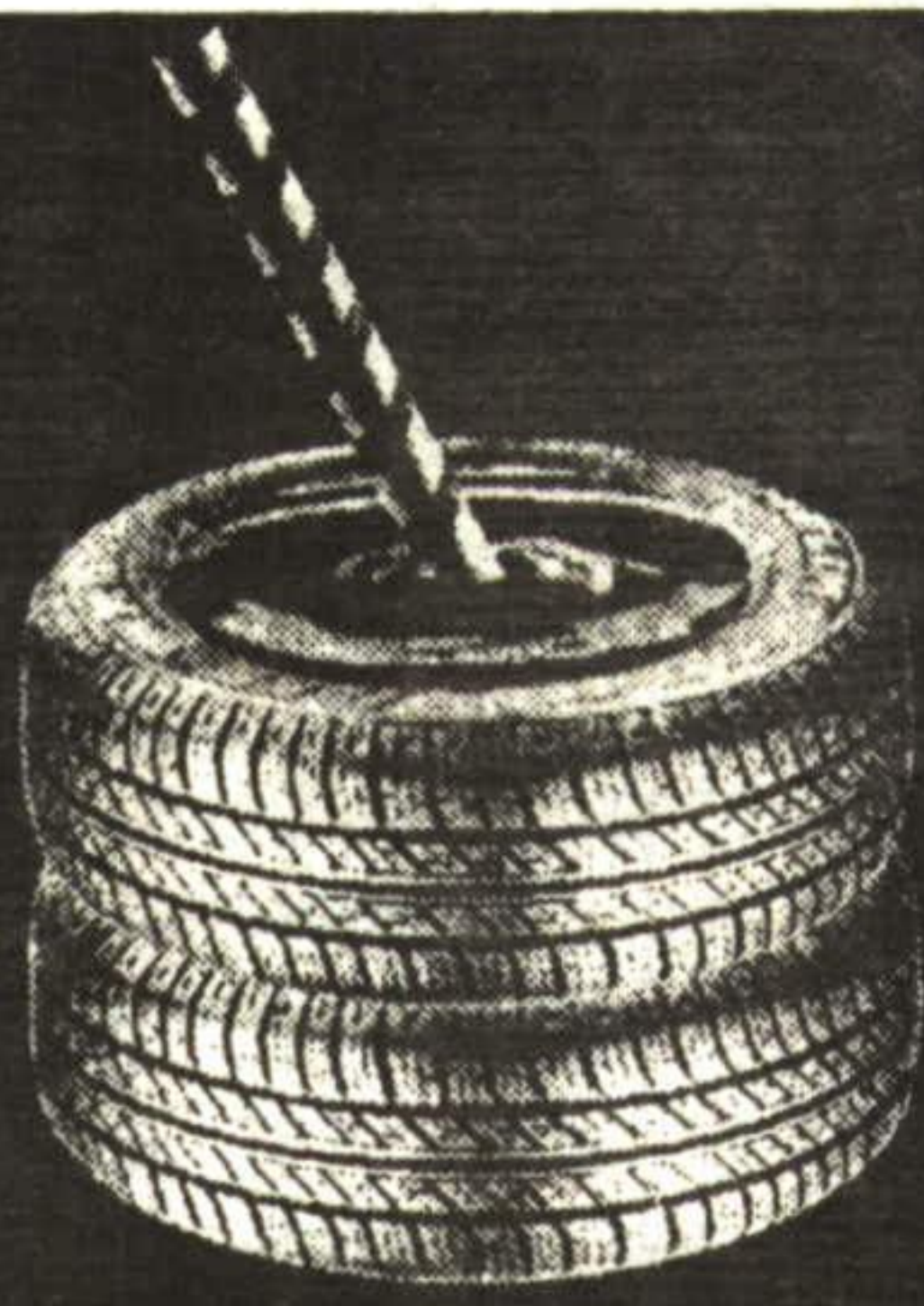
Many cases have a LED display on the front to indicate speed but you will likely never change the speed and remember it does not actually read the speed of your CPU. It just responds to a front panel switch setting. A front mounted reset button and power switch are a must.

The Ontario and other provincial safety codes require that all computers be CSA Certified. Look for the CSA monogram on the back of the computer. Many of the small companies building clone computers do not get the complete unit CSA Certified.

The absolute minimum is that the power supply be CSA Certified!

Our next article in this series will continue with our recommendations for the CPU and motherboard.

Moe Lamothe is president of M.A. Lamothe and Associates Inc. and is actively involved in consulting relating to computer hardware and software. He also conducts testing for CSA, UL, and European Safety Approvals. Moe is president of the Halton Hills PC Users'



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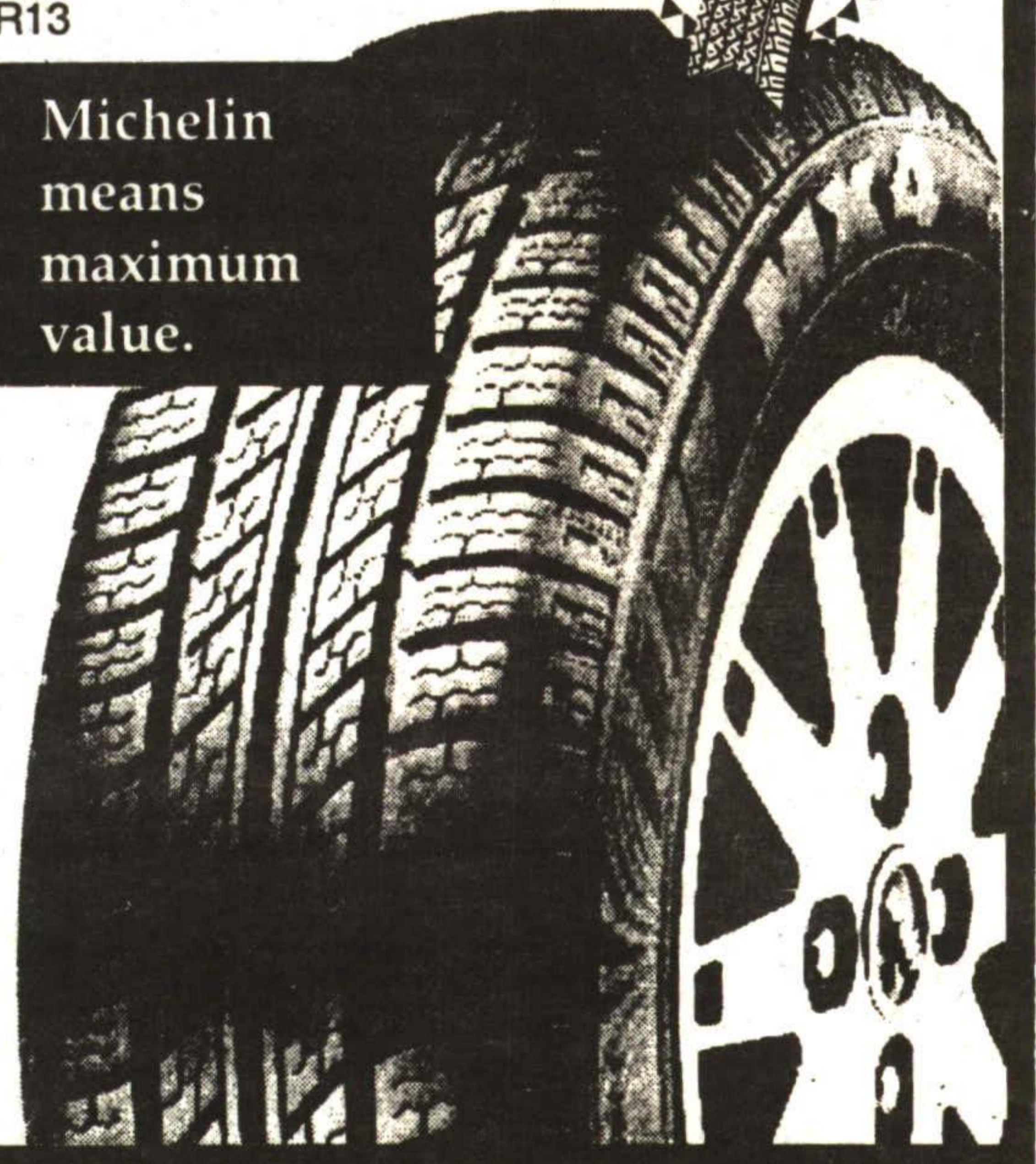
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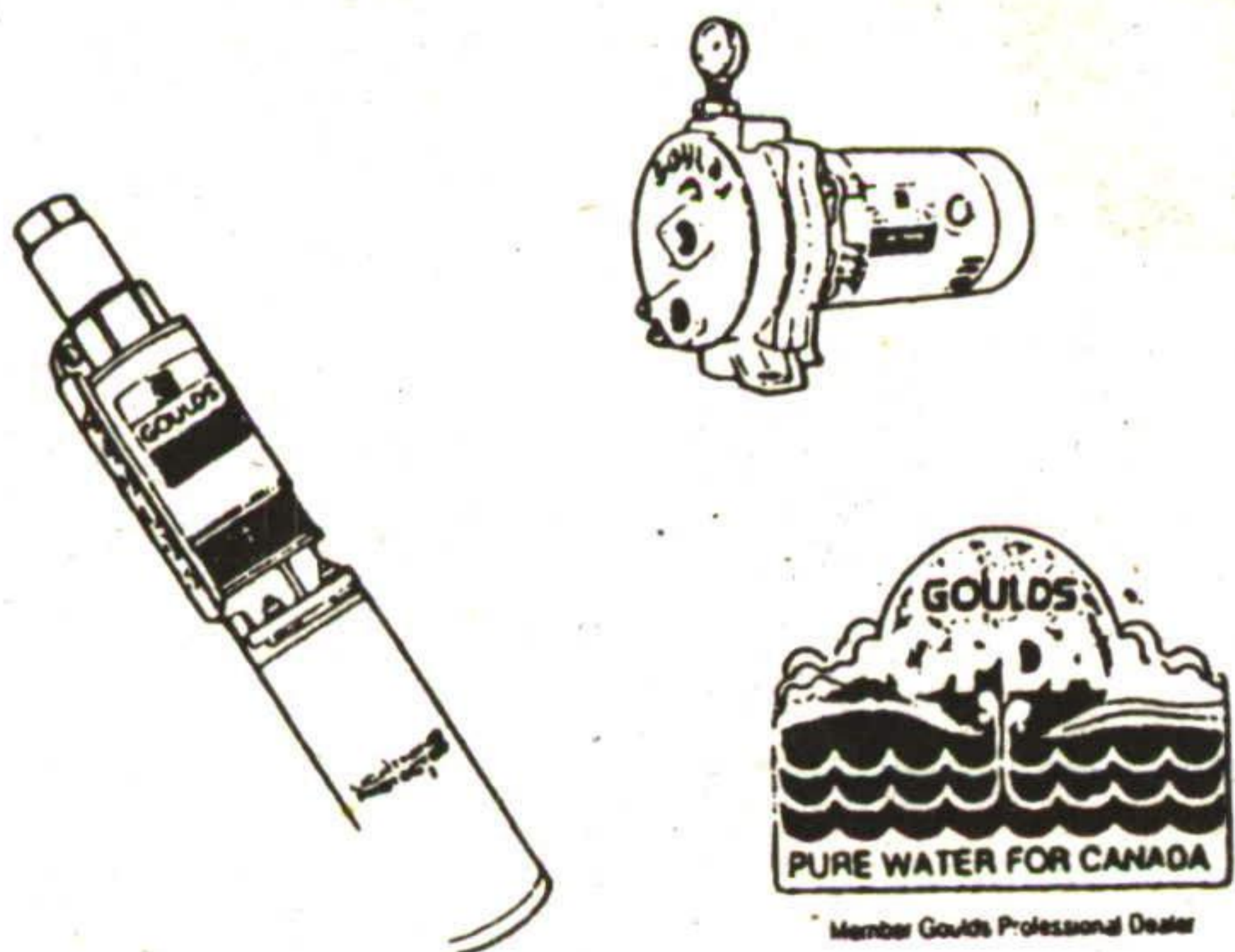
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