

# A guilty conscience cleared

After 30 years, a shoplifter makes good with cash, apology

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Five crisp \$20 bills filled the hand-addressed envelope that Punch and Judy children's shop co-owner Eric Karpf opened Monday.

That was the letter's first surprise.

"This was a shocker to me," Karpf said.

Then he read the accompanying anonymous apology, typewritten in three short paragraphs.

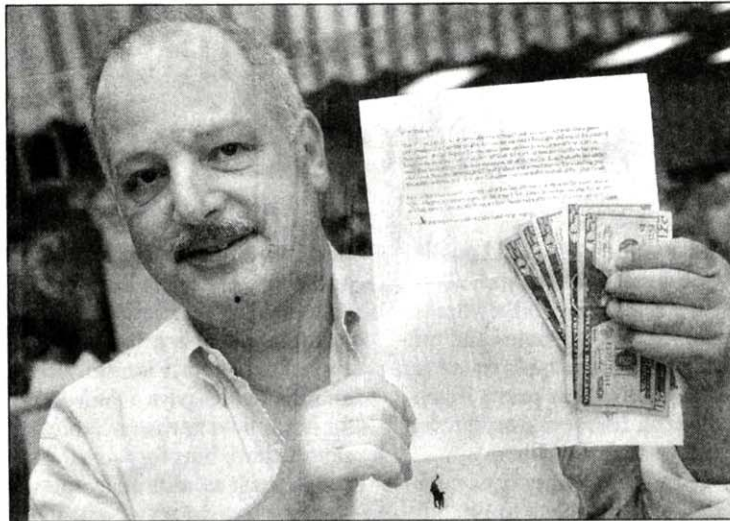
"Dear Manager," it began. "Over

30 years ago, I lived in Savannah as a teenager and was involved with some peers and participated in a terrible act that has caused me much heartache and regret for most of those years."

The act was shoplifting.

"I am sending you this money in hopes that I can somewhat repay you and make restitution for what I took," the author wrote, explaining that the elapsed years had erased the memory of exactly what had been taken.

Believing this good turn deserved another, Karpf and his wife, Linda, are matching the \$100 and donating the sum to Greenbriar Children's Center,



Carl Elmore/Savannah Morning News

Eric Karpf of Punch and Judy displays the letter and cash sent by a shoplifter with a guilty conscience.

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a charity they've supported in the past with donations of bedding and clothing.

Surrounded by Madame Alexander dolls and Eric Carle stuffed animals, Linda Karpf called Greenbriar on Thursday from the shop in Habersham Village.

"This is quite a story," said Executive Director Gena Taylor. "Since I've been here it's unheard of. It does renew your faith

in mankind."

It may renew the shoplifter's faith in others, too.

The Karpfs are happy to oblige the letter's request for absolution.

"We forgive them," Eric Karpf said. "It takes quite a man or woman to own up to that."