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Archives & Research Center

October 13, 1994

Section: BUSINESS

Edition: FINAL

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CLASSIC MOTOR CARRIAGES SUES CONSUMER ADVOCATE OVER LETTERS

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Classic Motor Carriages, a Miami car-kit company, is fighting to stop the ink flowing from Stuart Rado's pen.

The firm sued Rado on Tuesday to stop his letter-writing campaign, which began after the Office of the Attorney General filed a civil complaint against **Classic** for deceptive business practices.

Rado, a self-styled consumer advocate based in Miami Beach, has sent more than 3,500 letters to **Classic** customers since May informing them of the lawsuit and steps to file a complaint. He obtained a clientele list from the North Dakota attorney general.

Rado says he is just trying to help consumers who have bought defective or incomplete car kits. The kits, providing a fiberglass body and a chassis, allow consumers to build a replica of a **classic** roadster at home. The buyer adds the **motor** and drive train.

"We are not talking about the Mormon Tabernacle Choir here. We are talking about a company with a long history of problems dating back to the '80s," Rado said.

Classic Attorney Andrew Hall was unavailable for comment Wednesday. In an earlier interview, he said Rado "targeted the company and then, in these clandestine ways, sent these letters out."

Filed in Dade Circuit Court, the suit alleges Rado is using "malicious" and "false" statements to defame the company and is interfering with its customer relationships. The suit seeks an injunction and damages.

Rado defends his action by pointing to **Classic's** history of consumer problems.

State officials filed a civil complaint against **Classic** in July, accusing it of deceptive trade practices and civil theft. Consumers complained they paid \$9,000 to \$15,000 for incomplete or defective car kits. That case is still open.

In 1985 and 1992, the company signed agreements with the state promising not to violate consumer protection laws. It did not admit guilt and settled dozens of consumer complaints.

Despite **Classic's** suit, Rado continues his mailings. This week, he sent letters to 25 state attorneys general asking them to consider taking action against **Classic**, along with letters to about 60 newspapers.

Illustration:photo: Stuart RADO

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