

THE ROCKVILLE GAZETTE



Ex-worker, store not seeing eye-to-eye

LensCrafters is being sued for \$1.7 million

By Anna Joyce
Staff Writer

Former LensCrafters manager Sleiman Rizk says his boss told him not to hire minorities and disabled people, and then fired him after he did.

Rizk, who was general manager at the LensCrafters on Viers Mill Road in Wheaton from March 1991 until July 1992, is suing the eyewear company and the boss who fired him for \$1,750,000 in Montgomery County Circuit Court. He is accusing LensCrafters of wrongful termination, breach of contract and negligence in hiring the person who fired him.

Attorneys from LensCrafters headquarters and local attorneys defending the suit did not return phone calls from The Gazette and declined to comment through secretaries who did not give their names.

However, in a motion to dismiss the suit, LensCrafters at-

that a safe was left unlocked, which is in violation of written company policy. But in an interview with The Gazette, Rizk said he was "being set up."

Officials also stated that Rizk opened the store late one day, but Rizk said that he checked with the ADT alarm company which confirmed that the store was opened at least five minutes before the scheduled opening.

Rizk contends that throughout his employment with LensCrafters, zone operations manager Henry Moore told him not to hire "ugly people." He said Moore specifically defined ugly people as African-Americans and disabled persons.

Reached at the LensCrafters in Wheaton, Moore, a black man himself, also declined to comment, referring questions to LensCrafters attorneys.

In 1991, Moore told Rizk he "had to fire an employee or at least put him back in the lab because he had big lips." Rizk recalled during a recent interview.

He said he was also told to fire another woman because "she had beady eyes." Both of those employees were African-Americans, Rizk said.

After Rizk hired a person in a wheelchair for a temporary assignment counting customers, he said Moore's response was: "I don't believe you hired a person like that." He said the man was transferred to another store.

Rizk's attorney, John Heimina, declined to comment on the case until after the Oct. 12 hearing, saying that he did not want to try the suit in the press.

During his employment, Rizk said he did not complain to LensCrafters officials or outside agencies about Moore's alleged discriminatory practices because he felt that would have put his job in jeopardy.

However, the Circuit Court suit also states that Rizk did re-

Rizk contends that throughout his employment with LensCrafters, zone operations manager Henry Moore told him not to hire "ugly people."

port to LensCrafters officials incidents of alleged sexual harassment of employees by Moore.

Rizk told The Gazette that Moore commonly referred to one female employee as "short skirt."

Moore stated in the unemployment transcripts that he was investigated by LensCrafters due to sexual harassment allegations and "was cleared of those charges."

In the motion to dismiss, LensCrafters says, "(Rizk)

charges that his employment with LensCrafters was terminated because he (1) refused hiring instructions he at received and (2) report alleged sexual harassment Mr. Moore . . . Maryla however, does not recognize cause of action for wrongful charge under either of circumstances," the states.

It further contends that those claims were true, and does not recognize of action for abusive discrimination on opposition to

Rizk was originally determined employment compensation Department of Economic Employment Developmenting examiner. Rizk took

sue to Montgomery County Court, where Judge Raker reversed the decision March 11. But the Department of Economic and Employment Development filed an appeal the Court of Specials and the decision is pending