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The Providence Sunday Journal

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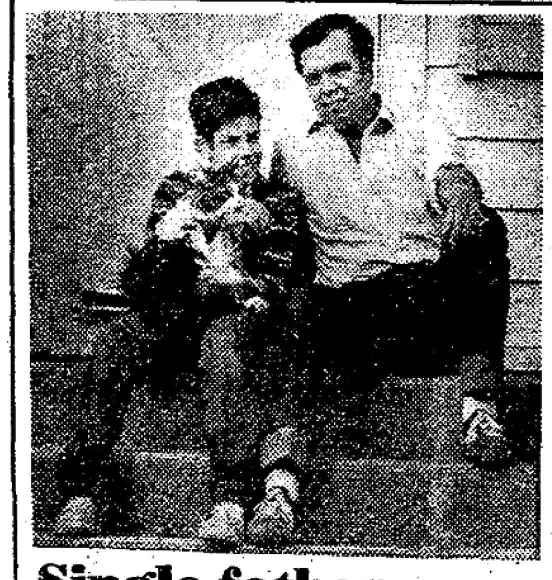


Single fathers

"I'm not remarkable — just different," says Ed Greenan, one of three single fathers who tell how they and their children have learned to carry on alone. ACCENT.

Twilight pastime

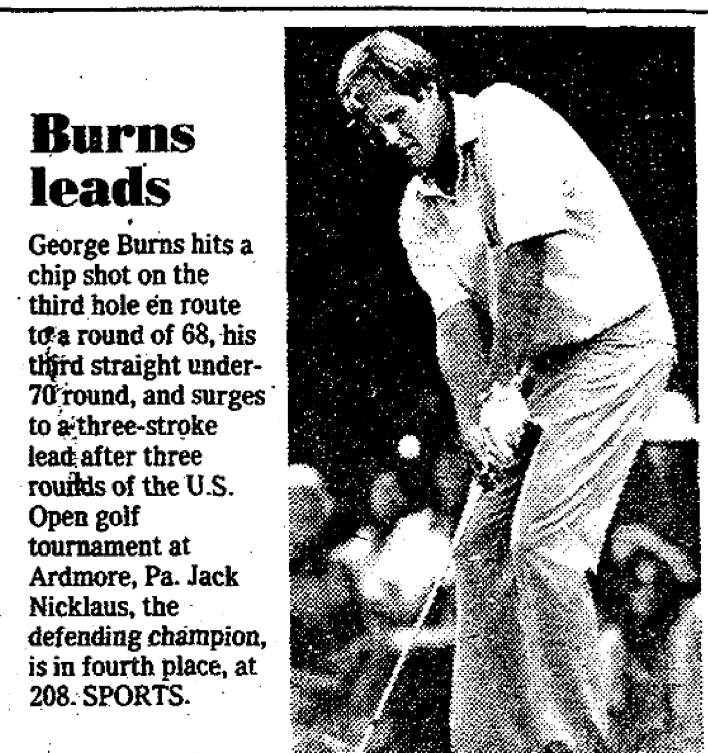
To the fans in the stands, Newport's spirit is not at the tourist havens but at Cardines Field, home of the oldest twilight baseball league in the U.S. NEWS/METROPOLITAN.

House of cards

New laws have made bankruptcy more attractive. Follow a family from debt to bankruptcy court. SUNDAY JOURNAL MAGAZINE.

Burns leads

George Burns hits a chip shot on the third hole en route to a round of 68, his third straight under-70 round, and surges to a three-stroke lead after three rounds of the U.S. Open golf tournament at Ardmore, Pa. Jack Nicklaus, the defending champion, is in fourth place, at 208. SPORTS.



Rainy and foggy, high in the 70s

Foggy with periods of rain through tonight. High in the 70s. Tonight, periods of rain continuing. Low 60 to 65. Tomorrow, chance of showers, in the 70s. PAGE A-2.

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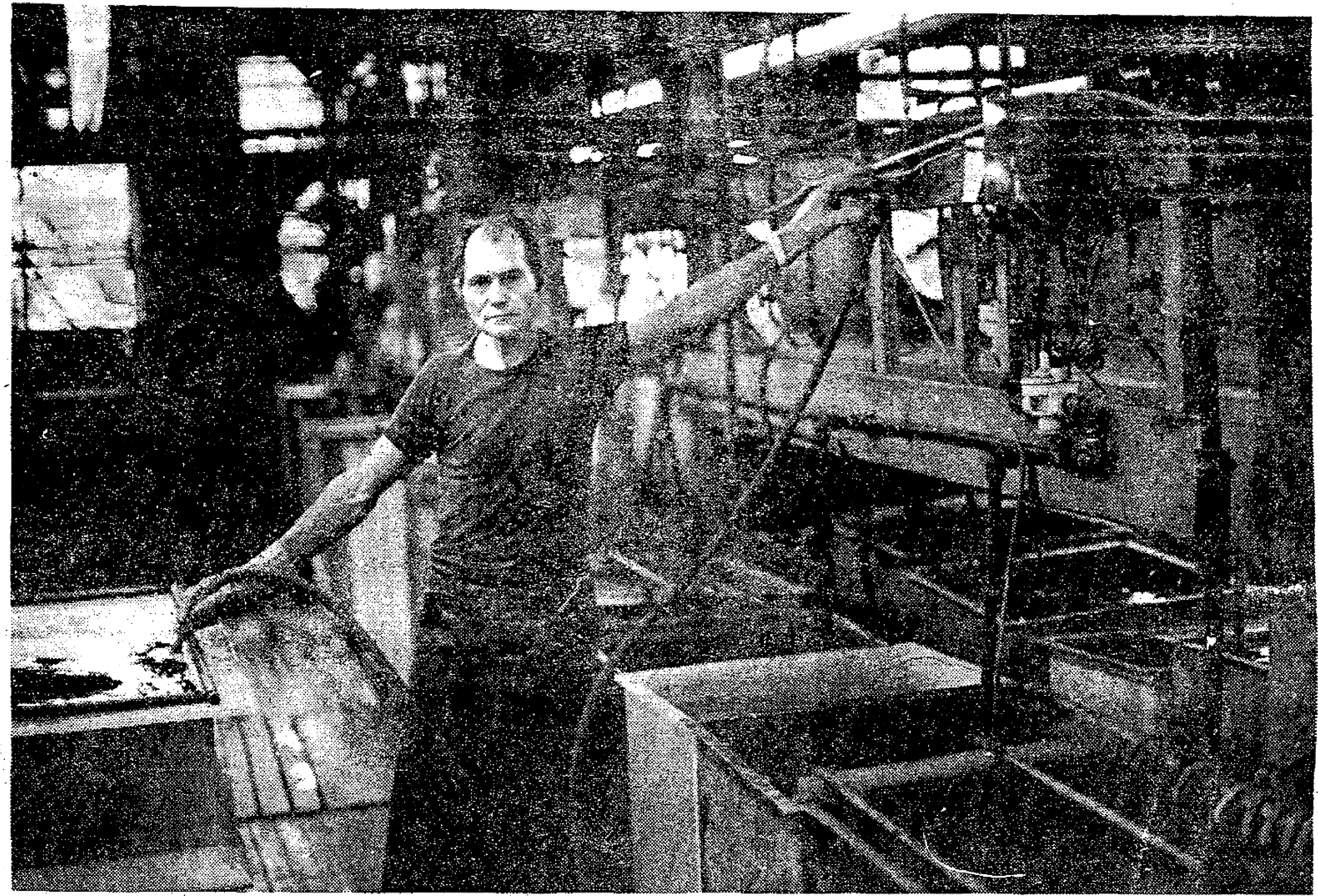
Working in jewelry



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

A PLATER works at his trade. Jewelry manufacturing, the state's largest industry, employs as many as 30,000 workers.

For thousands, a life in the shops means low pay and poor health

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

Jewelry work in Rhode Island is life at the bottom of industrial America.

The state's largest industry offers little but the threat of illness and a promise of poverty to many of the nearly 30,000 people who depend on it for a weekly wage.

The poorest of the factory work force are like migrant labor, forced to keep moving from job to job because of constant slowdowns, layoffs and hirings in the state's maze of 1,200 jewelry firms.

In hundreds of those firms, many tucked away in old mill complexes and garages, jewelry is made or assembled in rooms where the air is impregnated with metal dust and chemical fumes.

Blocked or inadequate fire exits are commonplace. In some shops, even basic facilities such as toilets are lacking.

Health-threatening conditions are not confined to the industry's host of small and often marginally run shops and factories.

Evidence gathered by the *Journal-Bulletin* from hundreds of interviews with jewelry workers, physicians and public-health officials and from state and federal inspection reports shows that serious health and safety problems exist in the larger factories as well.

* * *

DESPITE HIGHLY critical inspection findings in the state reports on the plants, little has been done to force meaningful improvements.

Officially, in both medical and public health circles, there is no jewelry health problem.

In reality, thousands of jewelry workers are exposed to chemicals and manufacturing processes that can, and often do, make them sick. The health problems are as numerous as the manufacturing processes, ranging from epoxy poisoning and severe skin disease to such long-term and possibly fatal diseases as chronic bronchitis and asbestosis.

Yet, when jewelry workers miss work or are disabled because of job-related illness or injury, most are not paid. And records indicate that very few of them ever apply for or receive workers' compensation.

* * *

ABUSIVE WORK practices in the state's sprawling jewelry industry go beyond factory doors.

Estimates are that well over 1,000 workers — many of them women and some of them children barely school age — illegally paint, solder and assemble costume jewelry for manufacturers in their homes.

The work, often rushed to meet factory deadlines, is done nights and weekends in basements or around kitchen tables on piecework rates as low as $1 an hour.

Jewelry workers are Rhode Island's largest single industrial force. Some are mold makers, senior platers and unionized toolmakers with wages and benefits comparable to other trades.

But overwhelmingly, the jewelry work force in this state is — and for decades has been — undefended, unprotected and widely exploited.

* * *

THESE ARE the major findings of a *Journal-Bulletin* investigation of jewelry manufacturing in Rhode Island, the nation's leading maker of costume jewelry.

Jewelry industry spokesmen reject charges that poor conditions and exploitative practices are widespread.

They point out — with some justification — that over the last decade, dozens of jewelry houses have modernized plants and begun to offer benefit packages that have improved overall working conditions.

They also note that while the question of health hazards in the jewelry industry

Turn to JEWELRY, Page A-16

About the story

The series on Rhode Island's jewelry industry was researched and written over 18 months by *Journal-Bulletin* reporter Bruce D. Butterfield.

More than 100 jewelry workers were interviewed, many repeatedly, at their homes or in the jewelry factories and job shops where they worked. Forty-eight factories and job shops were visited and their owners or managers interviewed.

In addition, Butterfield, using his own name, worked as temporary help in four of the companies.

Interviews were conducted with Rhode Island physicians, state health officials, federal labor and Occupational Safety and Health Administration officials, private health advocates familiar with the industry, lawyers and workers' compensation officials, and representatives of the Rhode Island Workers Union, which is attempting to organize the industry.

The *Journal-Bulletin* also obtained copies of previously unreleased state inspection reports on jewelry factories and, through a Freedom of Information request, records of federal inspections of jewelry plants.

Data from the industry, historical accounts and government studies were used to trace the founding and development, social and economic, of jewelry making in Rhode Island.

Butterfield, 35, is a native of Rhode Island and graduate of Suffolk University in Boston. He joined the *Journal-Bulletin* in 1971. He is a former bureau chief of the newspaper's South County and East Bay offices and is currently a special writer for the newspaper.

What's inside

- Inside the industry: a reporter works at four companies in the jewelry business.......Page A-18.
- A husband and wife who have spent many years in the industry talk about jewelry.......Page A-19.
- The beginnings of Rhode Island's jewelry history were 200 years ago in a Providence shop.......Page A-20.

Jury convicts Sciarra of role in mob slaying

Top-level crime figure faces life sentence for providing guns for 'hit'; new trial to be sought

By KAREN ELLSWORTH
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Rudolph E. Sciarra, said by police to be a mob chief, was convicted by a Superior Court jury yesterday of aiding in the 1965 murder of Raymond "Baby" Curcio.

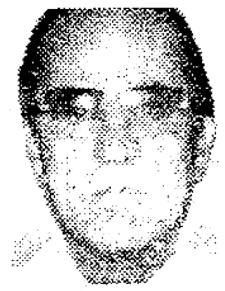
Sciarra, 56, of Johnston, was charged with providing the pistols used in the killing.

Sciarra has been acquitted of murder three times in the past. If yesterday's conviction stands, he faces life imprisonment.

The jurors deliberated a little more than five hours over two days before reaching their verdict about noon. Sciarra did not react when the verdict was announced, but his wife, Lucy, became hysterical and left the courtroom.

Sciarra asked Judge Francis M. Kiely if he could make a statement, but Kiely refused and ordered Sciarra removed from the courtroom. He will continue to be held without bail at the Adult Correctional Institutions.

During his two days on the witness stand, the state's star witness, Nicholas A. Palmigiano testified that Sciarra had given him the two guns which Palmigiano said he and the late Richard "Dickie" Callei used to kill Curcio. Last January Palmigiano pleaded guilty to the Curcio murder.



SCIARRA

Palmigiano testified that Raymond L.S. Patriarca, the head of organized

Turn to SCIARRA, Page A-10

Scheduling still uncertain for Green, Logan flights if air controllers strike

By PETER G. GOSSELIN
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Uncertainty and confusion remained yesterday about a plan that federal officials say will allow them to handle more than a third of the commercial air traffic at Green and Logan airports in event of a strike tomorrow by the nation's air traffic controllers. Negotiators for the controllers' union and the federal government met yesterday and will resume meeting today in an effort to head off the strike.

A spokesman for USAir, one of the largest airlines serving Green Airport in Warwick, said his company would not decide until late today what planes to fly under the emergency schedule in case of a strike — or whether to fly at all.

And several officials of the Federal Aviation Administration, which is responsible for running the nation's air traffic control system, could not agree on significant details of the plan, including when it would take effect.

One FAA official, assistant administrator Charles Murchison, said some airlines had not adequately prepared for a strike, despite knowing for months that

Turn to CONTROLLERS, Page A-14

What you can expect in case of a strike

AIRLINES: Federal officials say they have a plan to handle up to 33 percent of commercial flights at the region's major airports, but most airlines are taking a "wait-and-see" approach and have not yet announced what schedules they will fly.

BUSES: Greyhound has added about 10 percent more buses and drivers, which will boost passenger capacity by up to 50 percent. Bonanza Bus Lines "has the manpower if business increases," but is waiting to see what happens, a company official said.

RAILROADS: Amtrak will add up to 24 passenger cars to trains in the Northeast, but does not have enough cars to increase the number of trains it operates, said an Amtrak spokesman.

HOTELS: The Marriott Inn in Providence is offering a 33 percent discount to stranded travelers, who must show their airline tickets. Other hotels in the city did not have any immediate plans to follow suit.

A devoted dad of 11 reflects on a father's everyday role

By BARBARA CARTON
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

In honor of Father's Day, the Journal-Bulletin *talked to Edward P. Gallogly, chief judge of Rhode Island's Family Court.*

Judge Gallogly is also the father of 11 children ranging in age from 34 to 19. Peter. Mike. Paul. William. John. Robert. Margaret. Mark. Mary. Patricia. Brian. Three lawyers. One law student. One law school graduate now working as an FBI agent. An actor. A budget analyst. A chemical engineer. A bank management trainee. A recent Catholic University graduate. A Harvard University sophomore.

During the 12 years he has been with the Family Court, Judge Gallogly has seen the court's juvenile and domestic caseloads triple. He has seen more divorce. More custody fights. More juvenile crime.

This year, he expects the court to handle about 650 child-abuse cases.

* * *

What was it like being father to 11 children?

I am quite proud of our children. We had many worries, but, generally speaking, I felt proud of the fact that we had 11 kids. I did. Some people thought we were crazy . . .

We've got a little summer house down in Snug Harbor and when the kids were growing up, we went down there for summers. . . . I had six bunk beds in one room . . . Army surplus . . . with Campbell's tomato soup boxes under each bed for each kid, where they kept their skivvies and their shirts and their jackets and their shoes and their socks. Instead

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Jewelry

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has been hotly debated, there is virtually no official documentation of worker illness or disease.

But claims of improvements mean little to the majority of workers in the many workshops and small factories that make up the bulk of the industry. Theirs is an unchanged world of hard work, unclean work places and the constant threat of layoff and unemployment.

And those made ill from the work — even in the better factories — go unnoticed and abandoned.

Workers exposed to chemicals, processes that can make them sick — and often do

For 12 years, Loretta Deitrich of Cranston worked for several large jewelry factories, gluing stones to rings, carding and linking jewelry pieces.

Like thousands of other women, she turned to jewelry for a job when the youngest of her five children reached school age and her husband's salary no longer kept up with the bills. "I had no skills. Jewelry work was all I could do," she says.

The jewelry factories paid Mrs. Deitrich minimum wage, gave her few or no benefits, and periodically laid her off. They also, her doctor says, made her sick.

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IN THE SPRING of 1977, Mrs. Deitrich — a benchworker for two years at Alan Jewelry in Providence — developed a chronic cough. Soon, her breathing became so labored that she had to sleep sitting up in bed.

Tests showed that Mrs. Deitrich, never a smoker and with no history of lung problems, had severe respiratory dysfunction. Dr. Denis Baillargeon, a Providence pulmonary specialist, asserts that "overwhelming" evidence led to his diagnosis: trachial bronchitis caused by work.

Although her job involved only assembling finished jewelry, she worked beside rows of lead solderers. Chemical plating, she said, was done in a room behind her.

"It was smoky. Like a smoky, smoky room," Mrs. Deitrich recalled.

For more than a year, she had been covering her arms with ointments and wearing long-sleeved blouses because she constantly developed severe rashes handling plated jewelry and felt jewelry boards. In a previous job she had breathed fumes from powerful industrial glue used to fasten stones to jewelry pieces.

On Dr. Baillargeon's orders, Mrs. Deitrich left work for six weeks. Her condition, he said, improved dramatically. But when she returned to the workbench, the lung and skin problems returned too.

For more than a month, Mrs. Deitrich continued to report to work despite the problems and Dr. Baillargeon's recommendation that she quit jewelry work.

Days, she coughed and wheezed constantly. Nights, she slept sitting up. After six weeks, fearful she might die, she finally quit the only work she knew.

It took six months for her condition to improve. Four years later, she is still taking medication to ease chest discomfort.

State law says she had a right to seek workers' compensation. She didn't.

"I wouldn't even know how to go about it. I've never done any of that," she said.

★ ★ ★

AS A BENCHWORKER engaged only in assembling jewelry, Mrs. Deitrich held a job considered to be one of the least hazardous in the jewelry industry. She also worked in a factory, now no longer doing soldering, that is among the cleanest in the state.

Thousands of other jewelry workers labor directly over unvented tanks of hot chemical solutions dipping costume jewelry for plating, or sit in unventilated rooms coating jewelry with epoxy and resins that are among the most allergenic agents available.

They bend over workbenches soldering jewelry and breathing fumes of lead and silver-cadmium, powdering molds for jewelry casting with talc that is contaminated with asbestos and silica, or cleaning jewelry in hot tanks of trichloroethylene, a suspected carcinogen.

Most workers, like Mrs. Deitrich's fellow workers, show no apparent signs of ill health. But others do:

- Robin Allard, a 16-year-old Central Falls girl who quit school to work putting epoxy on jewelry in a tiny second-floor factory near her home, had to be rushed to Roger Williams General Hospital when the epoxy she was working with caused her face to swell so badly she could not see. Doctors say she narrowly missed being scarred for life. For weeks, the shop owner had given her an ointment to cover rashes on her face, hands and arms and said of the rash, "Everybody gets it. It goes away."

When Miss Allard's parents sought compensation, they found that the firm lacked even basic workers' insurance.

- In one of the most modern jewelry factories in Rhode Island, Valerie LePere, 27, was assigned to sand down asbestos boards and solder jewelry alongside dozens of other workers on unvented workbenches. Miss LePere, then living in Providence, came down with acute bronchitis that doctors attribute to work exposure.

Although she tried to continue work, her illness recurred, and, her doctor says, developed into lung illness that forced her to quit jewelry work altogether. That was in 1978. Last summer, the *Journal-Bulletin* found her living in a third-floor tenement in the Dorchester section of Boston, broke and fearful of catching even a simple cold. In the two years since she quit her jewelry job, she had been sick continuously, losing job after job because of bronchitis, pleurisy and other chest ailments.

- John B. Iacoucci Jr., 57, of Sinclair Avenue, Providence, former head of jewelry casting for the Ideal Jewelry Co., has what doctors call talcosis from breathing industrial talc during 21 years of powdering cast molds. He has constant trouble breathing and, most days, pain in his chest. His doctor says his condition will get worse, not better. Eventually, he is likely to die from the disease if he does not die first from the lung cancer it promotes.

Yet when Iacoucci retired because of his illness, the jewelry company gave him nothing. After a year-long battle for workers' compensation, he was granted $102 a week to live out what remains of his life.

"I never thought it would make me sick like this," he says. "Nobody told me what I did might be harmful."

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THESE CASES — and those of other workers with health problems spanning the entire range of jewelry manufacturing jobs — were drawn from extensive interviews with jewelry workers, their physicians and health experts in and out of government.

There have been no studies to determine the extent of such illness in the industry.

Last year, the Rhode Island Lung Association, in cooperation with the state Health Department and some of the state's leading physicians, documented the potential for serious and even life-threatening health problems in virtually every phase of costume-jewelry manufacture.

In most cases, the processes involved low-level exposure to hazardous chemicals and materials thought to pose no imminent threat when handled with proper worker safety procedures. But such procedures were commonly absent in the 48 jewelry factories and workshops toured by the *Journal-Bulletin.*

In several workshops, jewelry was spray-painted by workers who wore no masks, in "spray booths" with clogged ventilation systems. In another shop, blowers to protect workers from the dust generated by polishing machines were shut off because "there's only the two of us working today."

Workers in soldering shops routinely used asbestos boards, recently outlawed in jewelry work because of the threat of asbestosis. None of the shops ventilated fumes generated in the soldering operation, in which the use of lead flux and silver-cadmium created potentially hazardous fumes.

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IN SEVERAL plating shops, workers who wore no respirators or protective garments dipped jewelry into unvented tanks of hot acids.

In another, jewelry was degreased in a 55-gallon drum containing hot 1,1,1-trichloroethane, a powerful intoxicant and suspected carcinogen. A single copper water line around the rim was supposed to keep fumes from escaping. It didn't.

"It's OK. We're careful with it," the owner said.

In one of the largest and best-run plating shops in the state, acrid mist and odors from a variety of cyanide and acid tanks filled not only the rooms where plating was done, but also the stringing room where 16 women worked silently at rows of workbenches attaching pieces of jewelry to plating racks.

An ammonia spill at the shop gagged workers, but production did not cease. A *Journal-Bulletin* reporter who worked at the shop for two days was ordered to "hold your breath" and run past the spill.

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STATE HEALTH officials readily concede that "sloppy housekeeping," as one of them put it, is epidemic in jewelry.

"We can't produce the hard data, but we can make a good guess there are exposures out there. We know from our investigations and our experience there are a number of exposures out there that are a serious health problem," says James Hickey, chief of the state Health Department's Occupational Safety Division.

Hickey's appraisal is based in part on 100 inspections at jewelry plants over the last seven years and on complaints from workers. The Health Department refused to release the reports, but summaries were obtained by the *Journal-Bulletin* and verified as accurate by health officials.

They show a pattern of sloppy handling of chemicals, high worker exposure to chemical and metal fumes and a general lack of safety information and procedures in the plants.

Yet in only a few cases where there was evidence of an immediate threat to workers did the Health Department seek improvements. Many of the firms were never reinspected, even when the owners failed to notify health officials that they had corrected serious problems uncovered in the inspections.

The principal job of inspecting industrial work places in the state, health officials argue, rests with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration. But the federal agency's activity in the industry has been limited.

In all of 1980, records show, OSHA performed only eight general inspections of jewelry factories. The year before, only three.

Home and factory: where the work of the jewelry industry is done

Annually, the jewelry industry in Rhode Island produces just over $1.2 billion in costume jewelry that is shipped throughout the United States and to markets in Europe and South America. Though its hold on the industry has slipped in recent years, Rhode Island remains the costume jewelry center of the nation and one of the powers in the world jewelry market.

But the industry is an old and fragmented one, living in a collage of work places spread across the state.

At the top are the large jewelry manufacturers with substantial plants: Hedison Manufacturing in Lincoln, Catamore in East Providence, B.B. Greenberg and Vargas Manufacturing in Providence and Monet Jewelers in Pawtucket, to name a few.

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BUT MOST of the industry, and an overwhelming majority of the work places, are in hundreds of smaller manufacturing plants and an estimated 1,200 small contract or "job shops" tucked away in backyard garages and old mill complexes: 16 firms in an aging mill complex at 50 Aleppo St.; 18 serviced by dark elevators of the old Wanskuck Mill on Branch Avenue; a half-dozen in the old Uniroyal tire complex in Providence, and 16 in the old Atlantic Mills.

Such complexes and old factory buildings that house these jewelry shops dot the state; to an outsider they are an invisible industry.

Shop after shop is up a dark and creaking wood stairway or at the end of a long, dimly lit mill hallway. Plywood-covered doors with hand-scrawled signs pointing to buzzers are all that mark dozens of shop entrances.

Ring the bell, wait, and a door or a peephole opens. Inside are an owner, a relative and three employees. Or there is an extensive shop with up to 50 workers. Rarely, in either case, are conditions good. Peeling paint on ceilings, windows boarded up or covered with sheets of yellowing plastic, cluttered workbenches, boxes and crates blocking aisles and fire exits are commonplace.

This is the backbone of the state's jewelry industry: A maze of small manufacturing shops competing against each other for the right to produce jewelry fast and cheap.

When business is good, such shops and factories swell with help and work. As business falls off, they shrink overnight. Always, there are jewelry shops hiring or being formed and always there are other shops laying off help or going out of business.

In the home

Jewelry work extends beyond even the smallest contract shop, reaching into the kitchens and living rooms of thousands of workers.

Last year, investigators from the Rhode Island Department of Labor knocked on an apartment door off Broad Street in South Providence. Inside, they found a family of Southeast Asian refugees assembling jewelry for a major Rhode Island manufacturer.

"The mother, father, grandparents and all the children sat around the kitchen table nights carding and linking jewelry," recalls Roberta Orticerio, chief of the state's Labor Standards Division.

In a Bristol tenement, inspectors for the division found a mother and her 8- and 10-year-old sons sitting in the living room on a school day linking jewelry for a nearby job shop.

Such homework operations in jewelry have been illegal in Rhode Island since 1936.

Last year, more than 1,200 jewelry job shops were registered with labor officials under a *new state law designed in part to find illegal* homework operations and shut them down.

In spot checks on nearly half of those shops, labor investigators found that 60 were actually homes and ordered them to cease operations.

"I think we've managed to get a handle on the problem at least," Mrs. Orticerio says.

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ALTHOUGH her division's efforts have been in earnest over the last 18 months, the handle is a thin one at best. The new checks on licensed job shops spot only those shops clearly working out of kitchens and basements. Often, the grimmest home labor operations are more subtly conducted.

One homework operation uncovered by investigators and ordered shut down was found six months later by the *Journal-Bulletin* to be operating out of a licensed job shop in the Manton Avenue area of Providence.

The shop, two small rooms in back of a ground-floor tenement, was equipped with three foot presses and several workbenches. The owner, an affable man who had spent his life as a jewelry worker, conceded that the shop — empty most of the time — was designed as a front for a homework operation involving 26 women in three cities.

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LOTTIE RICCITELLI and the small epoxy and engraving shop she worked at in the basement of the old Wanskuck Mill complex on Branch Avenue illustrate why and how such abusive labor practices exist.

Mrs. Riccitelli, unskilled and with three young children at home, began working for the shop in the spring of 1970. On the books, she was a regular employee. But in fact, she mixed and painted epoxy on jewelry in her kitchen at home.

The pay was based on a piece-rate system that often made it impossible for her to clear minimum wages. But she had few choices.

In 1972, her husband died and his pension as a retired Providence police officer ended. Her son was 9, her two daughters 10 and 15 years old. Survivors' benefits paid her $43 a month for herself and each child.

Home labor was the only other income they had.

Several times a week, she said, she drove to the shop, delivered finished orders and picked up work. Every spare minute of the day and late into the nights she worked on the jewelry. On good weeks, she made $100.

But the longer she worked over the years, she said, the lower the piece rate became. One job, putting epoxy on zodiac signs, dropped from a penny a sign to six-tenths of a cent over three years. Another, putting epoxy on earrings, dropped from a penny to three-tenths of a cent per earring.

"After my husband died, I think he (the jewelry shop owner) felt he had me where he wanted me," she said. "I needed money and I needed to be able to work at home. If I complained, I wouldn't get work."

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COPIES OF order forms that she kept the last year of her work detail the low rates. A job she was given on Nov. 16, 1979, is typical:

The order called for her to mix and pour various colors of epoxy onto the tops of 14,257 tiny earrings. Each earring had to be stuck individually into a Styrofoam board and leveled to ensure that the epoxy would flow over the top evenly. Just the right amount of epoxy had to be put on each piece or it would flow unevenly. Once the epoxy dried, the earrings had to be taken off the boards and boxed.

The job took Mrs. Riccitelli 32 hours, a rate a supervisor in the shop told the *Journal-Bulletin* was "excellent." The pay, before taxes and other deductions, was $57.02 — $1.78 an hour.

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THE OWNER of the firm, who recently moved the business to another factory, denied all charges in a telephone interview after he failed to keep several appointments with a *Journal-Bulletin* reporter. At one point in the interview, he offered to allow the newspaper to examine his books, but later rescinded the offer.

"Now, I don't know what my lawyer is gonna say. But, if you take my word for it, everybody in that goddamn place got more, and I mean more. Everybody got more than they deserved," he said.

Asked specifically about homeworkers, he maintained: "All the cards are here; they're all in the shop. The work was in the shop."

Mrs. Riccitelli and her work records say otherwise.

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OTHERS IN the shop appear to have fared no better.

Extensive interviews with five former employees of the small engraving and painting firm — including a former officer of the firm — detail a pattern of violations of minimum wage and overtime laws, and abuse of the unemployment insurance system extending back a decade.

The firm was down a long unlighted corridor in a series of rooms the owner called a "dungeon."

Sandra Panciera, who quit the shop last spring after working there 12 years, says that as a homeworker she was supplied with an engraving pantograph machine in her house for nearly eight years. She moved inside as factory help for four years before quitting last year.

Carried on the books as a regular employee throughout those years, she said, she periodically collected unemployment insurance when business got slow, but continued to "work on the side" for the company.

"He said, 'Things are bad. Keep collecting. Keep collecting.' But all this time he would give me a little work on the side," she said. Only he would never pay me. Not until I was off unemployment. At one point, he owed me more than $1,000. But whatever he gave you, he would take 20 percent. He'd say he had to pay taxes."

None of the workers in the shop, she said, ever received paid vacations or medical benefits. "You made what you got on piece rate and that was it. If it was less then minimum wage, that's still all you got."

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DOROTHY WELCH, who quit last year after serving as an officer of the firm for years and who now operates her own jewelry shop, said such work practices became commonplace.

She quit in the spring of 1980, she said, after the owner proposed to workers that they file for unemployment, pay him half, and continue working in the shop. Employees in the shop, she said, rejected the plan and it was dropped.

One employee, she said, went to work as factory help when she was 15 years old. Over the next three years, she said, the employee often worked overtime and weekends but was never paid time-and-a-half. Piecework jobs she was given frequently fell below minimum wage, she said.

That employee, interviewed by the *Journal-Bulletin,* asked not to be identified but confirmed the allegations.

The workers stayed, each said, because they needed work that gave them flexible hours or that could be done at home. All conceded that they were violating the law against homework.

"It was good for me most of the time. But then it went bad," one said.

Small shops

Small shops employing fewer than 10 workers account for more than half of the jewelry industry in Rhode Island. Rarely is labor abuse intentional in these shops. Many are family operations, with relatives often constituting the majority of the workforce.

But the shops are still plagued with problems.

Economically, they are often places where the bare minimum wage, and in some cases less, is paid and there are no such things as worker benefits and vacations. Not infrequently, workers report, overtime hours are paid at straight-time rates.

Workrooms are small, often unventilated and filled with fumes and dust from the jewelry-making operation.

Last winter, Frances Gilchrist and her daughter were running S and G Jobbers at 1100 Chalkstone Ave., Providence. It was a small, closed-up room in the back of a three-story tenement. Two solderers and three women setting up the work crowded the room. An alcove filled with jewelry and order forms was the office.

On several visits, soldering fumes hung heavily in the air. Soldering boards containing asbestos were being cleaned and used by women setting up jewelry work. Mrs. Gilchrist said she bought them from another firm and did not know what they were made of.

All she knows, she says, is that she pays her help minimum wage, works 14-hour days herself, and is still losing money.

"They don't pay you nothing. Two cents a tack (a solder point) on this job. It's awful. I can't even pay the taxes," she says. "How can you worry about good working conditions when you can't pay your taxes?"

She blames homeworkers for driving the prices down.

Small shop owners interviewed throughout the area were clearly struggling with similar economic problems, unaware and unconcerned that conditions they themselves worked in resembled industrial sweatshops.

★ ★ ★

FOR TWO DAYS last fall, a *Journal-Bulletin* reporter worked in a small casting shop in Providence where the windows were covered with plywood boards, thick clouds of smoke and metal fumes filled the shop air from three open melting pots, and ventilation was absent.

Daily, workers were burned by the hot metal castings they had to handle and molten metal they had to pour.

Yet the owner of the shop — a burly, quiet, but amicable man — saw nothing wrong with the conditions. He'd worked in them himself for years. And he was proud of the fact that while he demanded hard work, offered no benefits and could guarantee no permanent jobs, he paid unskilled laborers at 15 cents an hour over minimum wage.

"I've always believed in a man earning a decent living," he said.

Larger shops, small factories

Conditions and wages don't substantially improve in many of the larger workshops and small factories that make up the industry. Indeed, for many workers in these shops, it is often worse. Absent is the camaraderie be-

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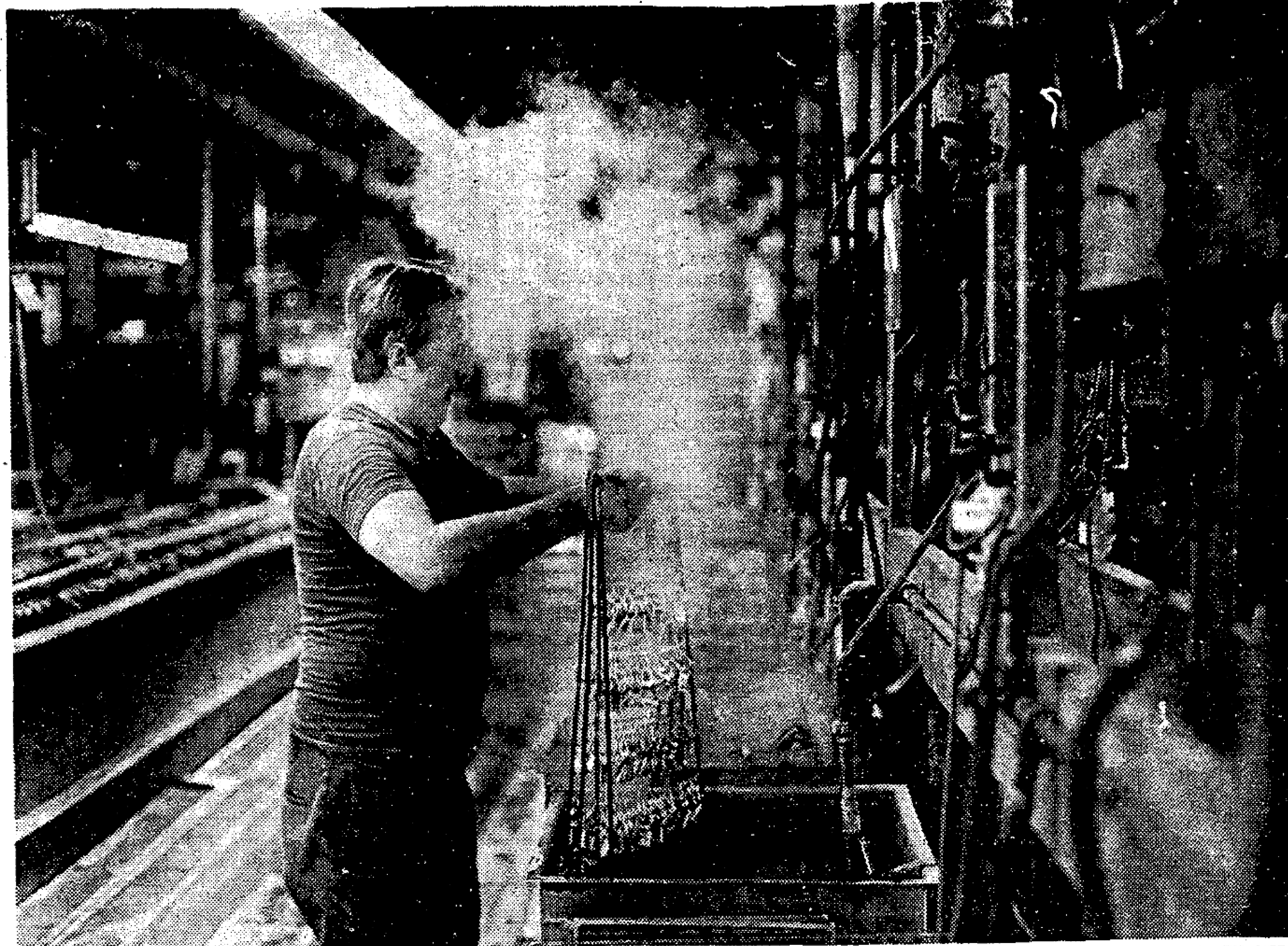

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

FUMES: Thousands of jewelry workers labor directly over unvented tanks of hot chemical solutions dipping jewelry for plating. Most workers show no signs of ill health. But others do.

A glossary of terms

CASTING: Forming of the jewelry piece by pouring molten metal into molds.

DEGREASING: Cleaning jewelry pieces with heated organic solvents.

ELECTROPLATING: Coating alloyed metal jewelry with precious metal by dipping into tanks of heated and electrically charged solutions.

EPOXY COATING: Applying epoxy paints, rather than precious metals, to decorate jewelry pieces.

HOMEWORK: Factory work done by workers illegally in their homes, usually at rates below the minimum wage.

STRINGING: Attaching jewelry pieces to racks before plating.

STAMPING: Forming of the jewelry piece by machine cutting.

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—Journal-Bulletin Photos by BOB THAYER

Women workers

The jewelry industry in Rhode Island depends heavily on women for its unskilled-labor needs. The industry estimates that 65 percent of its workers are women. Above, a woman stamps jewelry at a firm on Aleppo Street, Providence. At left, workers file out of Imperial Pearl Co., on Manton Avenue, Providence.

Industry at a glance

- **Companies:** More than 1,200 factories and job shops.
- **Workers:** About 30,000. State estimates 23,400 were employed in April, 1981. This does not include thousands of unemployed workers, homeworkers, illegal aliens or otherwise undocumented workers.
- **Gross value:** $1.2 billion in costume jewelry produced annually.
- **Average wage:** $168 a week, including salaries of supervisors, managers and higher paid silverworkers, in 1980.

Working in jewelry

Continued from Previous Page

tween owners and workers that makes many of the smaller shops bearable.

Floor ladies and male supervisors run the factories, frequently standing behind workers with stopwatches and shouting for faster production.

There is constant worker turnover. In several small manufacturing houses and large plating job shops visited by the *Journal-Bulletin*, nearly half the workers had been on the job less than six months. Many are hired as temporary workers because of the flow of job orders. Others leave on their own when work is periodically reduced to half-days or short weeks.

Regal Plating, a large plating factory in Providence that usually employs between 55 and 80 people, is one of the most stable job shops of its kind in the state. Yet, through most of last summer and fall, workers were constantly laid off and rehired on a week-to-week — sometimes a day-to-day — basis.

Even on days when there was work, the shop would frequently close early. Only a "core" of about 25 workers were guaranteed 30 hours a week. The rest, many of whom were considered full-time employees, were forced to turn to unemployment insurance for income.

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"THE WORK, good days and bad. The money, that hard. Not enough. Hard to live," said Adrianna Soares in broken English. Mrs. Soares, a 55-year-old Portuguese immigrant, was working as a stringer through that period. A regular employee for two years, she was earning — when she was not laid off — $3.15 an hour.

She stayed, she said, because her husband, a fisherman, was disabled and they needed the money for the family.

The owner of the firm, John W. Grosse, said he regretted the layoffs and lack of work. He blamed them on bad times in the jewelry industry and said he had no choice. "Our policy is to provide steady work for our core people. If I could do more, I would," he said.

His plating shop, he acknowledged, was "lucrative" in good times, with high company profits. "But you can lose it all in bad times if you're not careful."

Regal, at least, offered limited security and benefits to about a third of its workers. Other companies use far more workers and offer no benefits and security.

One small jewelry manufacturer on Aleppo Street in Providence, whose regular staff is about 25 employees, counted up W-2 forms for the *Journal-Bulletin* at the end of last year and was himself surprised at the results.

By his count, he hired and fired 242 different workers last year to fill those 25 jobs.

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SUCH JEWELRY FIRM owners, citing the "cyclical nature" of the industry, insist that flexibility in the monthly and even weekly size of their work force is essential to maintaining profits. However, the constant layoffs and hirings that this produces has created a work force at the bottom of the jewelry industry labor pool that is virtually migrant factory help.

There are no official statistics on these people, but their numbers are high. In the honeycomb of jewelry shop complexes around Olneyville Square in Providence, workers like George Menzivarz can be found every day of the week walking from factory to factory checking out the help-wanted signs permanently attached to hundreds of shops in Providence.

There were no jobs this day for Menzivarz, a 22-year-old native of Honduras who has worked in the jewelry industry here for three years. He had a job polishing jewelry for $3.10 an hour at a place called Borrelli's. They liked him there, the chief polisher for the firm says, and promised him full-time work.

But the owner laid him off after four weeks. In only one of those weeks was he given a full 40 hours' work.

"Mostly jewelry places are not very strong places to work. A lot of people think jewelry companies are good places to work, but they're not. The people aren't bad. They're just bad places," Menzivarz says.

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EVEN FOR skilled workers, there is often little certainty of employment.

"In this industry, they use you for six months a year and throw you out the door," says David, a 25-year-old plater who has worked in plating shops around Providence for seven years.

Still working in the industry, he asks that his full name not be used. His experience, however, is typical of what is considered one of the better paying factory jobs in jewelry.

Since he began working at 17, David — a tall, strongly built man — has held jobs in five firms, moving because of layoffs, short weeks or bad conditions.

Unlike most workers, his pay was always above minimum wage, sometimes $5 or more an hour. But the work is among the most dangerous and grueling in jewelry.

Face-stinging fumes filled several of the plating shops visited by the *Journal-Bulletin* that David reports he worked in. Temperatures in summer frequently exceeded 100 degrees, and the work called for constant lifting and dipping of jewelry into acid or cyanide-based solutions or into chemicals such as the dangerous trichloroethylene.

Frequently, David says, he went home with nosebleeds and headaches from the work. He talks with a deep, nasal voice that makes him sound as if he has a cold. It has been that way, he says, since his first year on the plating lines.

"I can't say it's the work that does it to me, but it always seems I'm stuffed up," he says. "The cyanides and stuff are like an irritant. Really, man, the inside of my nose sometimes is raw like hamburger. I have to wait five to six hours after work to feel right again."

"Today, I have the taste of cyanide," he said. "I can still taste it now. It's a bitter taste."

Larger factories

The large factories employing 100 to 500 people generally have better working conditions, particularly at plants situated in modern suburban locations.

Most of these companies also pay for individual Blue Cross health insurance plans, give regular employees one week's paid vacation, and offer a variety of bonus, incentive and profit-sharing plans.

But such factories, according to industry estimates, make up only 2 percent of the industry work places and 15 percent of the workers. Even here, the standing of workers appears only marginally better.

Job hazards in such occupations as plating, casting and metal stamping exist here as well as in the small shops, state health records show and officials concede. Unskilled work always begins at or near minimum wage, and rarely goes much higher.

The *Journal-Bulletin* routinely found bench-workers with 19 and 20 years' experience working for major manufacturers for $3.50 an hour — and less.

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THERE ARE NO sick day benefits and there is no job protection in the plants sampled by the *Journal-Bulletin*. Layoffs are common in the larger factories as they are in the smaller ones during the traditionally slow periods of summer and Christmas holidays, industry officials concede.

Although less dramatic than in smaller shops, there is also a constant turnover of labor. George R. Frankovich, vice president and director of the Manufacturing Jewelers & Silversmiths of America, a national trade organization based in Providence, agrees with estimates gathered from a half-dozen major factory owners that there is normally a 20 percent annual turnover.

Most of this transient labor is apparently not covered by company benefit plans, since the benefit packages outlined by several major manufacturers for the *Journal-Bulletin* were phased in over a year.

Most workers face the prospect of minimal benefits, minimum wages

There is no detailed breakdown of workers' wages compiled by state or federal officials, and no independent measurement of working conditions gauged by such things as fringe benefits.

The Manufacturing Jewelers & Silversmiths of America does compile some data on working conditions and wages as reported by some of its member firms in Rhode Island.

But the reporting is voluntary and the firms that comply are among the best in the industry. Even so, Frankovich refused to release the data, saying they would create labor unrest in companies that do not pay the highest wages and benefits.

"The minimum (benefit) would become the median (benefit) if we published the figures," he said.

The information that is available from state agencies, however, does not speak well of the industry.

Figures from the Department of Employment Security list the average salary in the jewelry and silverware industries last year at $168 a week — the lowest weekly manufacturing salary in Rhode Island and among the lowest in the nation. Even so, such figures are misleadingly high, says DES director Mary C. Hackett, because silverworkers' salaries are generally higher than those in jewelry and because the totals include the salaries of managers and supervisors.

Using adjusted figures, she says, the official wage level of production workers in the costume jewelry industry is less than $4 an hour — with most unskilled workers receiving 10 or 25 cents above the minimum wage, now $3.35 an hour.

The average income is further depressed by the regular layoffs common throughout the industry, she acknowledges.

Homeworkers, most earning below minimum wage, are not counted in any statistics.

One telling measure of the industry that is counted is taken at the unemployment offices every June, when many factories shut down for summer vacations.

Eight thousand workers — well over a quarter of the entire jewelry work force the last time that figure was counted, in 1979 — file for unemployment benefits because their shops have closed and there is no pay.

Even this, Miss Hackett acknowledges, presents a brighter picture than actually exists. Official estimates are that 1,000 or more jewelry workers who go without pay during their forced vacations also go without unemployment benefits for a variety of reasons. At least one reason is that many of these 1,000 are suspected by employment officials to be undocumented aliens ineligible for unemployment or recent immigrants unaware of any unemployment rights.

Immigrants, women meet labor needs of jewelry industry

Immigrants

Jewelry factories in the state, particularly the larger ones, depend heavily on first-generation immigrants for their unskilled-labor needs.

Portuguese, Hispanic and Southeast Asian workers are commonplace in the low-paying benchwork jobs and as assistants on factory plating, polishing and casting lines. Indeed, in some larger plants, immigrant labor is dominant.

At Esposito Jewelry, a large manufacturer of costume jewelry rings in a modern plant in Providence's Huntington Industrial Park, an estimated 60 percent of the 250 employees are Spanish-speaking immigrants from Central and South America and Cuba.

★ ★ ★

AT AMERICAN RING, another costume ring manufacturer, the owner estimates that nearly 90 percent of the 180 workers are first-generation immigrants, principally Portuguese.

"The only thing American in this place is the name," laughs president Renato Calandrelli.

Calandrelli says he hires immigrants because they work longer and harder than U.S.-born workers and have few complaints about pay, which he concedes is barely above minimum wage for most production workers.

By his own account, he has signed sponsor papers guaranteeing jobs for 50 Portuguese immigrants over the last five years. He did it, he said, as a favor to their relatives already working in his factory.

"I'll be honest with you. I prefer the people from the old country," Calandrelli said. "They get in at 6:30 when the doors open at 7:30. If I want overtime, they work. These people come here to work, not breathe air."

★ ★ ★

CALANDRELLI ALSO likes immigrant workers, he said, because they are loyal.

He cites an example of one Portuguese employee who had to leave work for several days because her son was in an accident. Though company benefits include no provision for leave or sick time, he said, he paid the woman's salary while she was out and helped defer expenses.

"I can tell you, because of what I did, I could throw that woman out this window 20 times," he said, waving his arm toward a second-floor window. "And 20 times, she'd come again."

In return for such loyalty and hard work, Calandrelli offers his workers steady jobs, a modest benefit package that includes vacation time, a clean and well-lighted factory and — though he stresses it is voluntary — help when they need loans or face family sickness.

In these repects, at least, his plant is the type industry officials like to point to — a substantial factory with a clean work place and a fairly stable employment record.

Women

Jewelry factories, large and small, also depend heavily on the labor of women.

The industry estimates that 65 percent of the workers in Rhode Island shops and factories are women. Most, the industry agrees, are in the lowest paid and least skilled jobs.

Such labor practices as piecework, in which workers are paid on the basis of production, are still widely used — though many workers complain that it is riddled with abuse. A state labor report years ago concluded that the practice depresses jewelry workers' wages, a view state labor officials hold today.

"Mothers' shifts" are also common. The shifts, five or six hours during the middle of the day or at night, provide an opportunity for women with children at home to work part of the day, the industry argues.

But the shifts also provide the factories with a source of cheap labor that can be easily laid off and rehired. Benefits for these workers, when they exist, are pro-rated, based on hours over a given period.

Frankovich acknowledges this, but insists that the arrangement and layoffs generally work no hardship on most of the women in the factories.

"I think that many feel it's mutually beneficial," he said. Women will "go to work in September when the kids are in school. They're usually laid off near Christmas. They want to do their cooking, get everything ready for Christmas. The kids are home from school for a while. And they take it easy.

"It's ideally suited for them. Many love it that way," he concluded.

★ ★ ★

FLEXIBLE HOURS and lack of required skills do provide jobs for those who might otherwise be locked out of the labor market.

But there is little about the state's jewelry industry that is ideal for workers — men and women.

In small shops and large, the pay is low and layoffs are frequent. Dirty, unhealthy workplaces abound. So do exploitative and outright illegal labor practices.

There are, as industry spokesmen point out, clean, modern factories with fairly stable employment records. But those are the exception in an industry feeding off so many work places that no one has a precise count of them.

Roberta Orticerio, the state's labor standards chief, is one official who believes the industry is long overdue for change.

"When an industry can get work processed for a dollar an hour when minimum wage is $3.35 an hour, it isn't fair. When you're firing people, and laying them off and when you're using the unemployment system to keep them on hold, it isn't fair.

"When you see the monthly reports of average hourly wages of production workers and you find the largest bulk of the workers are in the jewelry industry and they're getting the lowest pay, something should be done.

"Somehow, it should be made to clean up," she says.

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Inside the industry: a reporter works at 4 shops

Working in jewelry

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — The job, the employment agency man said, was simple jewelry work. "All you gotta do is break off castings. They'll show you how it's done."

Twenty minutes later, I found the jewelry shop in a section of old factory where the windows were covered with bare plywood sheets.

Inside, blue smoke and the heavy smell of metal filled the air, drifting over rows of deserted workbenches.

Past the benches, fumes billowed from three fire-leaking smelters. More smoke poured from a pair of casting machines noisily pumping tiny metal angel figures into 20-gallon tin tubs.

Two husky men in T-shirts slapped grease into the machines. Nearby, a third sorted castings on a steel-sheeted table.

"I guess I'm your boss for the day," the man at the table said with a shrug. He peeled off a pair of leather gloves, walked me to a corner of the factory, and began with the basics.

"Here," he said, drinking from a water hose running onto the floor. "If you get thirsty today, use this. If you gotta piss, use the floor."

"Do it here, near the drain."

★ ★ ★

THE SMALL casting shop is one of four Providence jewelry factories and related "job shops" this reporter worked in last October.

The jobs came through Manpower, an industrial employment agency supplying temporary labor to the jewelry industry. A classified newspaper ad promised cash pay for daily work.

There were few requirements. At 6:30 each morning, job seekers gathered outside the

'Put your name on an application, they give you a job. That's about all there is to it.'

boarded door of the employment office on Chestnut Street and waited.

When the door opened, the day's supply of labor crowded into a room with plastic chairs and waited some more. Two men behind a glass window gave out work slips by pointing to individuals in the crowd.

"Put your name on an application, they give you a job. That's about all there is to it," a fellow worker advised me the first morning.

My name, address, Social Security number and desire for jewelry work went on a job form. There were no questions.

Within 15 minutes, I was handed a work slip and told to report immediately to the jewelry factory scribbled across it.

Casting shop

The work at the small casting factory quickly settles into a routine. "It ain't hard. That's why I like it here," the worker at the steel table tells me.

His name is Don, in his early 20s and with arms scarred from burns and nicked from sharp edges on the castings. We work across from each other at a huge steel table along the back wall of the factory. There is little time for talk.

Our job is dragging heavy tubs of castings from the two die-casting machines, dumping them on the table and snapping the figures off. Hundreds of castings to a tub. Five angel figures to a casting.

The leather gloves supplied to protect our hands are torn, with holes in various fingers.

Mid-morning, stooping to pick up a hot casting, I burn the index finger of my left hand. It immediately blisters through one of the glove holes.

I wash the wound with the water hose in the

'We don't got Band-Aids or nothing like that here.'

corner of the factory and put on another pair of gloves with holes in different fingers.

"We don't got Band-Aids or nothing like that here," Don advises me. I rummage through a first aid cabinet on the wall. It is empty except for a box of dust-covered salt pills.

There are few worker amenities.

The floor near the water hose is the urinal.

There is one toilet available on the second floor of the next building. That, Don says, is to be used only for defecating.

There are no fans or vents to remove the thick metal fumes and smoke. A plywood sheet covering one of the window frames is removed for air.

But the window opens on an enclosed alley and no breeze blows through it.

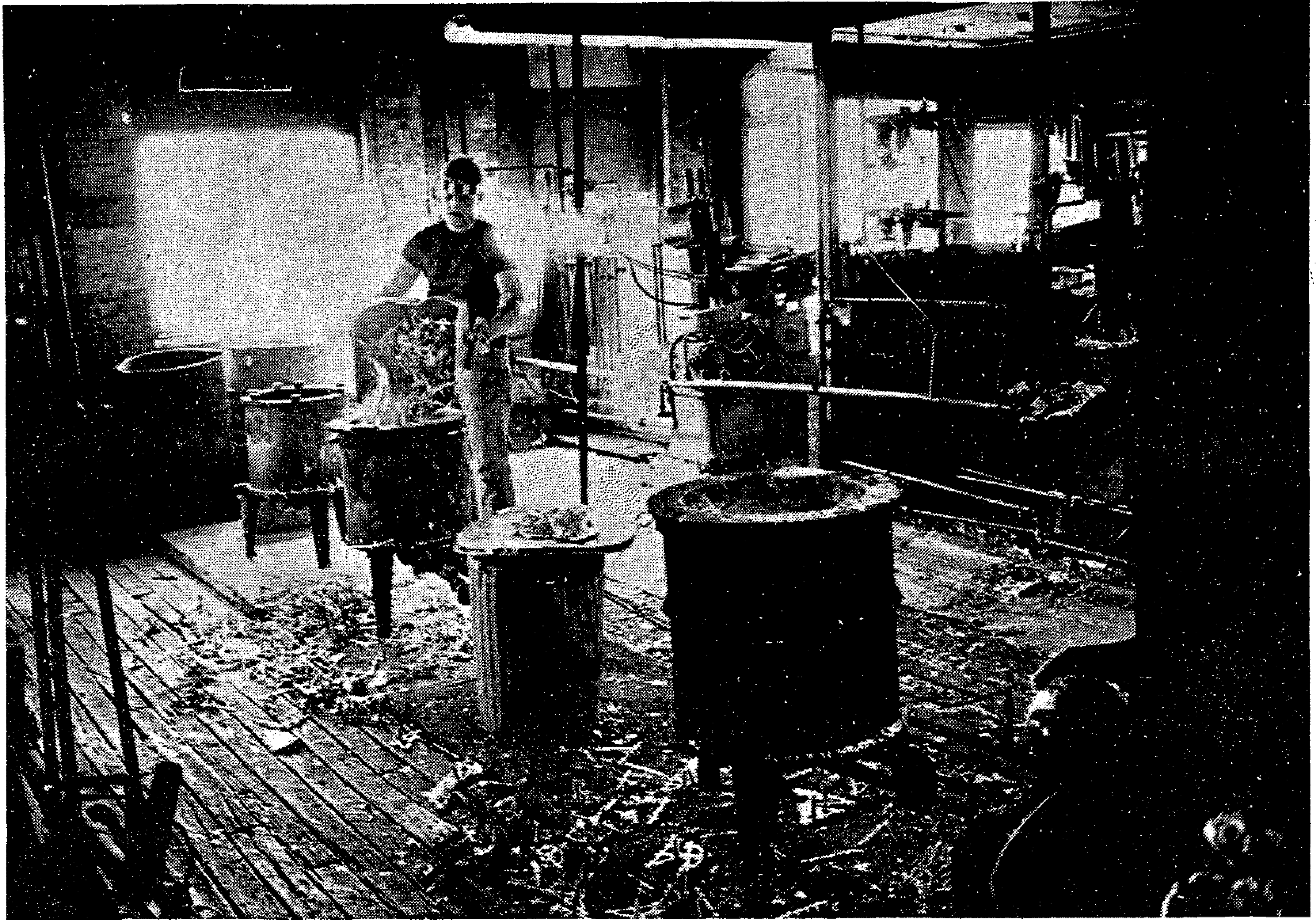
★ ★ ★

TWO HUSKY MEN ladle molten metal from the smelters into the casting machines every few minutes. One, Peter, is the shop owner. Neither talks nor leaves his machine. My orders come through Don.

One of our jobs, he advises, is to keep the smelters filled. Every 15 or 20 minutes, we leave the steel table with boxes of old casting to be remelted for the smelters.

It is touchy work. Chunks of old metal surround the smelters and must be kicked out of the way or stepped over. Fire spits from gaping holes in metal sheets enclosing the heating units under the smelters.

If the castings are dumped in too slowly, flames lick at the cardboard boxes and our



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

CASTING SHOP: Chunks of old metal surround the smelters and must be kicked out of the way or stepped over. Picture was taken several months after reporter Bruce D. Butterfield worked there.

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

TOSSED ASIDE: Work gloves, when they are issued, are often not used by workers.

arms; too fast, and the castings splash hot metal back at us.

"You gotta watch yourself over there," Don says, showing a three-inch burn blister on his right arm he got that morning "firing up" the smelters.

Molten metal periodically splashes from the casting machines. Twice, as I pass the machines, hot metal splashes on my pants and shirt, burning into the cloth before drying.

There is no time for morning or afternoon breaks. Lunch, 30 minutes, is eaten at an abandoned workbench.

At 4:30 the machines are shut down and Don hoists the plywood against the open factory window, securing it with a two-by-four.

Pete, the owner, walks over with my job slip. "You work good," he says cordially. "Come back tomorrow. I'll give you eight hours."

This day has been 7½ hours. Back at the employment office, $17 in cash is slipped under the window.

Plating shop

The plating shop is within easy walking distance of the employment office.

Huge fans on one wall of the building pump stinging air onto the sidewalk. Inside, 60 men and women work in an acrid mist that bites the face and casts a haze throughout the shop.

"That's from the tanks," says Kate, the floor lady in charge this day of 26 women in the shop's stringing department. "The fans get most of it, but there's always a lot they don't get out. You'll get used to it."

Within an hour, the air no longer bites and the chemical smell seems gone. But the acrid mist remains.

Sixteen women, mostly Portuguese-speaking, work behind a partition at rows of old wooden workbenches attaching little silver jewelry lockets onto wire racks destined for the plating tanks. Eighty or so lockets to a rack. A new rack every five or six minutes.

They wear gloves to keep their hands from marking the jewelry. The gloves can't keep the wire hooks on the racks from sticking into their fingers.

"Come girls, let's go. Let's go. Let's go!" Kate yells, clapping her hands as she walks up and down the rows of benches supervising the work.

★ ★ ★

MY JOB IS to collect the racks of jewelry from the stringers and carry them to one of three banks of plating tanks.

The racks go on metal arms of a conveyor moving over a circular row of tanks, lowering and raising the jewelry racks in and out of cyanide and acid-based metal solutions.

The solutions are heated and charged with low levels of electric current so that the metal in them adheres to the jewelry.

When a rack completes the circle over the tanks, the jewelry on it is coated with gold. Frank, a plater in charge of the line, takes the racks off the conveyor. My work is to keep the conveyor filled.

We wear knee-high rubber boots to keep the solutions from splashing onto our legs. But there are no gloves to handle the racks, which periodically fall into the tanks.

We quickly fish the racks out and rehang them on the moving conveyor. But the jewelry is hot and our hands are covered with chemicals. I complain to Frank.

"You get used to it," he says. "I've been washing my hands in this stuff for years and it's never bothered me."

The work at the shop is hot, hectic and often rushed with no time for idle talk.

Platers in the shop show workers the order of tanks for dipping the jewelry, but none explain what is in the solutions that fill the shop with acrid mist.

Too long in any one solution, Frank warns, and the jewelry is ruined. Before they are plated, bracelets and waist chains I pick up have to be "washed" in a hot, steaming cyanide bath in a corner of the shop.

A huge floor fan blows fumes from the cyanide tanks and a row of other tanks with unknown chemicals directly into my face. Unlike the general mist in the shop, this stinging, choking mist never loses its punch.

Still other jewelry must be dipped first into a degreasing agent. The process involves dipping the racks into a large tank of swirling chemical fumes.

The chemical is trichloroethylene. But I am not told that it is dangerous to inhale or touch.

A series of cold water coils around the top are designed to keep the fumes inside. But production demands at the plating shop mean

'What happens if I put it into the acid tanks by mistake?' I ask. 'You'd be dead and so would half the shop.'

the jewelry has to be removed quickly. With the jewelry come the fumes.

It smells sweet and makes me dizzy.

Midday, a solution beside the degreaser spills, choking and gagging us.

"Hold your breath. Hold your breath like this," Frank yells, running past the spill, quickly dipping jewelry into the cyanide bath, and running back past the spill again.

At his urging, I do the same. Only later do I learn the spill is from an ammonia bath.

The fan over the cyanide bath spreads the fumes through the shop.

★ ★ ★

AN OPEN barrel of crystalized cyanide is stored next to the tanks, accessible to all workers.

At the end of the day, I am ordered to scoop a pail of the cyanide out of the barrel and "dump it into the copper tank." The tank, situated in a bank of tanks, is pointed out to me only after I ask specifically where it is.

"What happens if I put it into the acid tanks by mistake," I ask a foreman after the task is complete.

"You'd be dead and so would half the shop," he says flatly.

Manufacturing plant

It is a one-day job in a 150-employee jewelry manufacturing plant off Allens Avenue. The man by the metal detector inside the employees' entrance smiles, shows me where to hang my coat, and turns me over to a woman who introduces herself as Evelyn.

"We're going to the findings room," she says. "It's easy. But it's the most boring job in the world."

The findings room is a wire-caged area in the middle of other wire-caged areas on the basement floor. The work is simple, safe, but tedious: all day at a steel table surrounded by the wire of the cage, counting tiny jewelry lockets, earring posts and earring mountings.

The orders are usually counts of 500 pieces, sorted in groups of five or 10 and dropped in pockets on plastic trays. A time card recording how long each order takes to count must be filled out on each job.

The counting ceases only when a factory bell rings for 10-minute morning and afternoon breaks and for a 30-minute lunch. During work hours, the door to the cage is locked to the outside for reasons never explained.

There is no talking or employee movement between cages. But Evelyn, at the other end of our cage, counting jewelry findings by pouring them into a machine, has a radio turned down low.

"It's the TV soaps," she says at break. "Something to listen to. Without it, I'd go nuts here."

Ring making

The plant is a modern, cinder-block building in the Huntington Industrial Park, landscaped with scrub pines. A pair of new Mercedes-Benzes are parked in front. They belong to the owners.

Employees, screened by a uniformed security guard, enter through a side door near the back.

"It's a good place to work," the guard assures me.

The work is stamping, shaping, soldering, polishing and plating costume jewelry rings. More than 200 people — many of them Spanish-speaking immigrants — labor in a huge, open room unbroken by walls.

My work the first day is pushing the ends of flattened ring bands around a steel finger. After the ring shape is formed, the tips are pounded together on the finger with a plastic hammer.

The process demands use of both thumbs to push the ring ends over the steel finger, and to secure the ring while the tips are hammered together.

Two to four rings a minute, depending on the thickness and stiffness of the band. I do 140 the first hour.

Shaping the rings is simple. But the task, repeated over and over again, takes its toll.

By noon, my thumbs are numb.

It is a day before the feeling returns to my left thumb and nearly a week before all the feeling returns to the right.

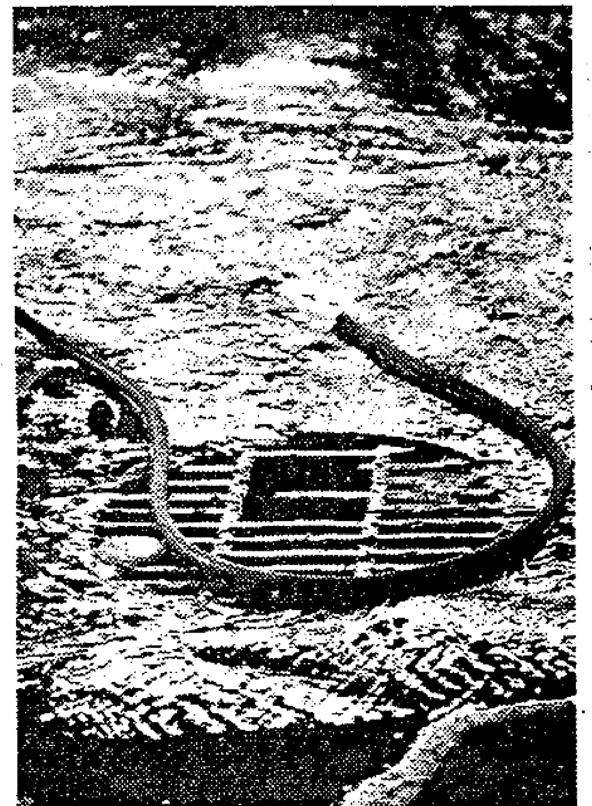
★ ★ ★

THE FACTORY is clean and brightly lighted. But by mid-morning, a light haze fills the work areas. Rings are being dipped in a degreasing tank in front of me. "Is that what smells?" I ask the operator.

"No. It's the plating," he says, pointing to the front of the factory. "It always gets like this when they're doing a lot of plating."

By mid-afternoon, the haze clears. "We don't do a heavy load of plating here," Joe, one of the platers, says during lunch. "Nobody's ever got sick from the stuff."

The plating area, several compact banks of small, plastic tanks, is sandwiched between the stringers and polishers and open to the factory.



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

HOSE: This scene is typical of conditions found in smaller shops. Another such shop is described in story.

Three small fans in a side wall near the tanks provide the only ventilation.

A polisher, eating a sandwich at his bench near the tanks, holds his nose and grumbles in Spanish when I ask him about the tanks. "Not good," he manages in English.

His hands, like those of other polishers in the factory's lunchroom, are split and covered with red sores. Later, at quitting time, he grimaces in pain as he runs them under water in the washroom.

★ ★ ★

THE SECOND DAY at the factory, thumbs still numb, I am sent to the press department. The job is operating a 200-pound drop press.

"Don't be afraid, it won't hurt ya," the foreman in the department says "But take it slow until you get used to it."

The advice is welcomed. The work is fast finger movement, placing ring castings into the die of the press and pulling them out again after the design is stamped by 200 pounds of metal.

A safety arm sweeps across the ring casting a second before the press drops. And the press drops only when two buttons are pushed on either side of the machine.

But the machine, the foreman warns, some-

'It's easy. But it's the most boring job in the world.'

times automatically repeats itself. Though the safety arm should push hands out of the way, he says, "Accidents can happen when you get careless."

Within 15 minutes, I am stamping 12 rings a minute.

Running the machine for the day remains my principal job. But other work goes with it. Before the rings are stamped, they must be dipped into a chemical tank and cleaned.

The tank is called a degreaser. Like the one at the plating shop, it is heated and filled with fuming trichloroethylene. I am shown the tank and told what to do. But I am not told to guard against the fumes.

"What's the stuff in the tank?" I ask.

"It's only a cleaning solution," the foreman replies.

I degrease about 100 rings at a time, dump them into a small box and take them to the drop press machine. They are wet with trichloroethylene. So, throughout the day, are my hands.

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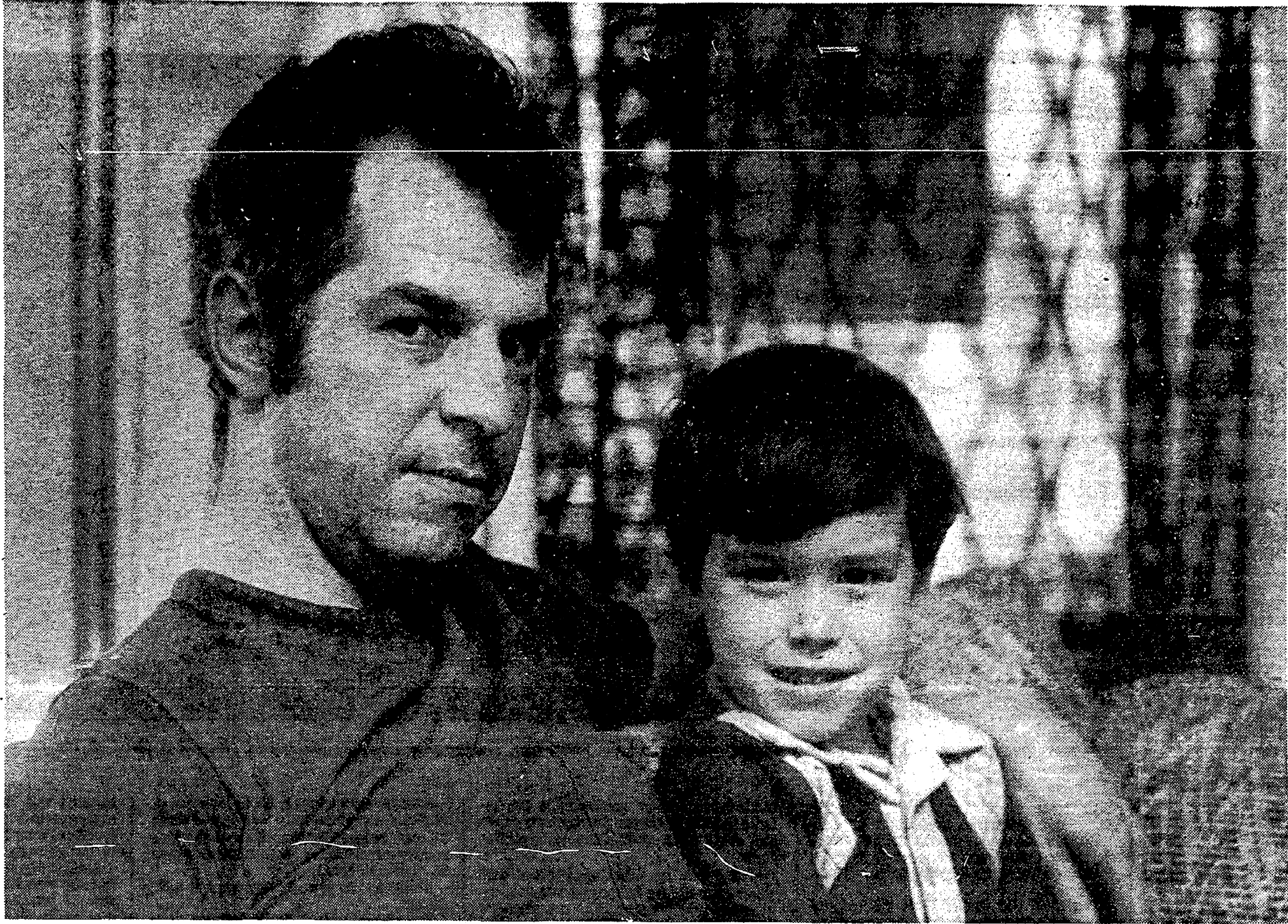
A worker talks: 'Jewelry is my whole life'



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by ANESTIS DIAKOPOULOS

A LIFE IN JEWELRY: Roland Morin, left, and his son, Daniel. Morin has worked a variety of jobs during his 18 years in jewelry.

Working in jewelry

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

When Roland Morin was 16, he quit school and — like his mother and sister before him — went to work in the jewelry industry. He is 34 now and still a jewelry worker.

His wife, Janet, is a jewelry worker too. So is her brother and so are most of the couple's friends.

"To me, jewelry is my whole life," Roland says.

In past years, Roland and Janet Morin have done homework on the side — carding and linking jewelry in their apartment nights for extra money.

Last year, they opened a part-time jewelry job shop. The venture failed, but the Morins still hope to run their own jewelry business someday.

In the factories, Roland has held such supervisory positions as chief expediter, head of job shop work and shop foreman for a variety of small manufacturers. Janet has been a benchworker, generally earning minimum wage with no benefits.

Layoffs and job changes have been frequent. But Roland is proud that he has never been without work more than a few weeks.

The Morins were interviewed several times over the course of a year. Below, in their own words, they tell how working in jewelry has affected their lives. First, Roland tells how he got started:

When I quit school, I wasn't stupid, but in a sense I was stupid. I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I was willing to work at anything.

My first job was at Victory Pearl, in the dipping room. It was something you didn't have to know how to do, really, to work in jewelry.

I'd put pearls in racks and dip them in lacquer and paint. The lacquer had a strong smell that bothered you. But it wasn't like the paint room, where there were the fumes. The lacquer, you wouldn't taste it in your throat. You wouldn't see it in your spit. But the paint, the paint in the spray room, you would.

Every once in a while we'd have to stop and go outside for some air.

I used to come home and I always felt like I had a big lump in my throat. And like, after a while — a couple of hours after my system relaxed — I would start spitting. And, my God, it would be all different colors, you know, depending on the colors I worked with that day.

I had like blue spit — not dark, dark blue, but you could see, like the powder from the spray. It was like that color.

And I would say, "My God, I'm inhaling all that stuff." But, you know, you're young and you don't think that much about it. Nobody thought much about it in those days. All you want to do is work and make money.

I stayed two years and went in the service. The last three months or so I was foreman in the spray room. I liked the job. I found I was good at it.

My plan was to go back after I got out of the Army.

But my wife, when I got out of the Army I was going with her at the time, and when I got out, my wife and my mother said: "No, don't go back there." So . . . I didn't go back.

And I guess it was luck or something, because about a week later there was this explosion in the spray room.

I had a friend, he's still a good friend, his body's all scarred up from that explosion. (Pauses)

What did you do then?

So I didn't go back there. Instead, I went to Nyman Manufacturing, making paper cups. Then I left there and went back to jewelry. Hillcraft. And from Hillcraft on, it's been more or less jewelry, except for a few months here and there when I got laid off.

Now Hillcraft, I'll never find another place like that. Not in jewelry. It was, to my mind, the best. Not for the money. The money, in jewelry, the money is never good.

But Tony Angeli — he was the owner — he was the kind, if he moved up you moved up with him. I got hired as a delivery boy, just driving the truck delivering jewelry. Then I became assistant to the expediter. Then a few months later, expediter, then head expediter. I was running like 22, 23 lines all by myself.

That's the way Tony was. He moved you up. And it was like a big family, all working together.

Every year he'd have an outing and invite the whole plant to his house. Everybody would order what they wanted a few weeks ahead of time — lobster, steak, anything you wanted to eat, you got.

People would go out there — he had this big house — and use the pool and the tennis courts and even ride his horses.

One time it rained and he moved the party inside. That's when I really got to respect him. He didn't have to let us in his house. But when it started raining, he didn't think twice about it. He invited everybody in and the kids ran all over the house.

He never minded at all. And his wife didn't have a maid. Like I say, Tony is my idol when it comes to jewelry. That's what an owner should be like.

Why did you leave?

I worked for Hillcraft about three years, close to four. But I knew he was going to sell out soon. And I knew it wouldn't be the same. Whenever a new owner takes over, it's never the same.

And, at the time, we had some different ideas about how things should be done. I guess you could say we had a few disagreements. But we parted friends. Good friends. I'll always admire Tony.

Where did you go?

After I left Hillcraft, I went to Alice Jewelry. It was more money. I became a production foreman. But it wasn't like a family.

We had a guy, a young kid at Alice, I liked him too, his name is Bob. He knew what he was doing, but he didn't know how to handle people. And he would think nothing of standing behind a worker with a watch and just stare at them. He'd say nothing but stand there for up to half an hour staring at them and timing them. Even when they went to the bathroom, they were timed.

Now, these people were making minimum wage. And they had to put up with this stuff.

We had this one girl — she was an older woman really — and she used to like to talk a lot. She was fast, one of the best workers in the place. But she liked to talk and they didn't like people to talk. So they put her on this bench all by herself.

Everybody called it the punishment bench. They put her there so she wouldn't have anybody to talk to.

And this same woman, because she was so fast, would always get this one stringing job that nobody else wanted. It was called a J hoop because you'd have to string an earring, then loop it. I remember, the rate — it was a piece-rate job — was 27 cents for 100 earrings. Only the very fastest could make minimum on the job.

That poor girl would be stringing them constantly, every day, every day. Her fingers would be bleeding, all cut up from the wires because to make the rate you had to go very fast.

So she'd come to work with bandages on every finger, no kidding, and by the end of the day she'd be crying. But still, they wouldn't give her anything else to do. Finally, she quit.

Roland's wife, Janet, comes in from her part-time job at Imperial Pearl. Her back aches, she says, from sitting at a workbench putting pearl earrings on cards for five hours straight. The work was in a basement factory room with no windows and steel doors that are always shut. Janet talks:

I don't like it, but that's all I can find right now. What good would it do to go someplace else anyway? They're all the same. And whenever you move, go to another place, they always start you out at minimum again. It doesn't matter how long you worked in jewelry and how much experience you got, they always start you at minimum wage. It's not fair, but that's the way it is.

They use us instead of paying overtime. In the day, they call it mothers' hours. At night, it's part-time. We're the first to go when work gets slow.

Usually, it's three, four weeks, then you're laid off. Then a few weeks later, maybe a month, you go back again.

You can't even collect unemployment. You have to work 20 weeks to be eligible. One time, I worked 18 weeks straight at Imperial Pearl. I started the end of July, the beginning of August and I worked all the way up to three weeks before Christmas. And they told us we were being laid off.

I was so mad. I worked all that time, and paid into it all that time, and I couldn't collect a cent.

Two lousy weeks. And just before Christmas, too. . . .

Over the course of the summer and early fall, the Morins struggled to set up a job shop, carding and linking jewelry nights and weekends in a rented room of a Franklin Street tenement. The shop failed.

But other things were happening to the Morins. In the fall, when they were interviewed again, both had changed jobs. Janet went to Vargas Manufacturing, a job she says was the best she ever held in jewelry. Roland, walking through the old Uniroyal Complex on Valley Street, spotted a help wanted sign at a small jewelry manufacturer's and ended up with a job as supervisor of job-shop work.

We had to give our own job shop up because of the taxes and the way the jewelry companies would pay, or not pay. What happened was, we started out as a jobber, as a contractor, in our house. And I found out that was illegal, which I still don't understand, so I rented a place.

But with the cost of the rent and my taxes and paying my people, for what I was making from the jewelry companies, it wasn't worth it.

It was better for me getting a job at night, working overtime or extra for a company that offered me a future. Now, this place I'm at now, I think it's gonna be good.

The hours are long. Eight, nine o'clock several nights a week. Saturdays until 2. But I don't mind. I think I got a future here.

And I know I can save the company money. Like, the type of work here, I've got two of the jobbers I had before. Now, I know they need the work. The going rate for carding we're doing now is \$2.20-\$2.50 a gross cards. So, I started them off at \$1.50 a gross. They were pushing quite a bit of work out.

But yesterday, one called me up and said, "Roland," she said, "I'm doing the work cheap as it is and you're giving me work in the morning and you want it back that night."

So I talked to her and I said, "Well, I'll tell you what, I can give you a little more." So I went up to \$1.75.

Can a jobber survive at that rate?

Well, when you think of it, they're working for nothing, really.

At my place, most of the work goes to jobbers because they can do it cheaper than we can. And we got a lot of "mothers' hours" at my place. And from what I see, they don't get any benefits or things like that.

Don't get me wrong. My boss is good. He runs a nice place. That's just the way jewelry is. There isn't enough money in it to pay people what they should get.

Right now, we're making earrings. We're selling them to Swank for \$25 a dozen. On the cards, we're putting \$42 tags. That's \$42 a pair. I can't get over that. Why can't the people who make them get a little more?

Roland's new job lasted only several months. A few days before Christmas, after an argument with the owner over an order, Roland quit.

Two days later, however, he had a new job as shop foreman of a small manufacturing house in West Warwick. Again, he was optimistic.

It's kind of far. But the owner's really nice. It's a small place. He's got like 13 girls. But he's the type, he needed somebody to help him run the shop.

He's also the type, in other words I work for him, but he's looking for someone that someday he can just go home and say, "I own the shop but I don't have to go there every day." You know, he's looking for someone to run it.

Again, the hours are long. It's a lot of work. But I'm happy there. He's been in business about five years and he don't know that much about jewelry. But he's going strong. He's doing good.

And he appreciates somebody who can set up and run his operation. I needed a car, to show you. I needed a car to get back and forth 'cause I got a big wagon. It was killing me on gas getting back and forth. So he brought me a car. A little Gremlin. And I'm paying him back so much a week. And he didn't know me from Adam.

He's kinda like Tony Angeli at Hillcraft. I think I got a good opportunity here. I think it's gonna be good.

Last month, Roland was laid off again — the third time in a year. Never long without work, he found a job in a printing shop. Still, he considers himself a jewelry worker. "It's in my blood," he says.

'Right now, we're making earrings. We're selling them to Swank for \$25 a dozen. On the cards, we're putting \$42 tags. That's \$42 a pair. I can't get over that. Why can't the people who make them get a little more?'

'It doesn't matter how long you worked in jewelry and how much experience you got, they always start you at minimum wage. It's not fair, but that's the way it is.'

—Janet Morin

What's ahead

The series will continue through Friday in the *Journal* and *Evening Bulletin*.

Monday: A look at jewelry firms in an old mill complex and the people who work there; and a brief look at how jewelry is made.

Tuesday: The story of the thousands of people who work at home for sub-minimum wages.

Wednesday: How the jewelry industry robs its workers of their health; and a look at the hazardous chemicals used in the manufacturing process.

Thursday: How federal and state inspectors do little to clean up the major problems they know exist.

Friday: Conclusion: what is ahead for the jewelry industry.

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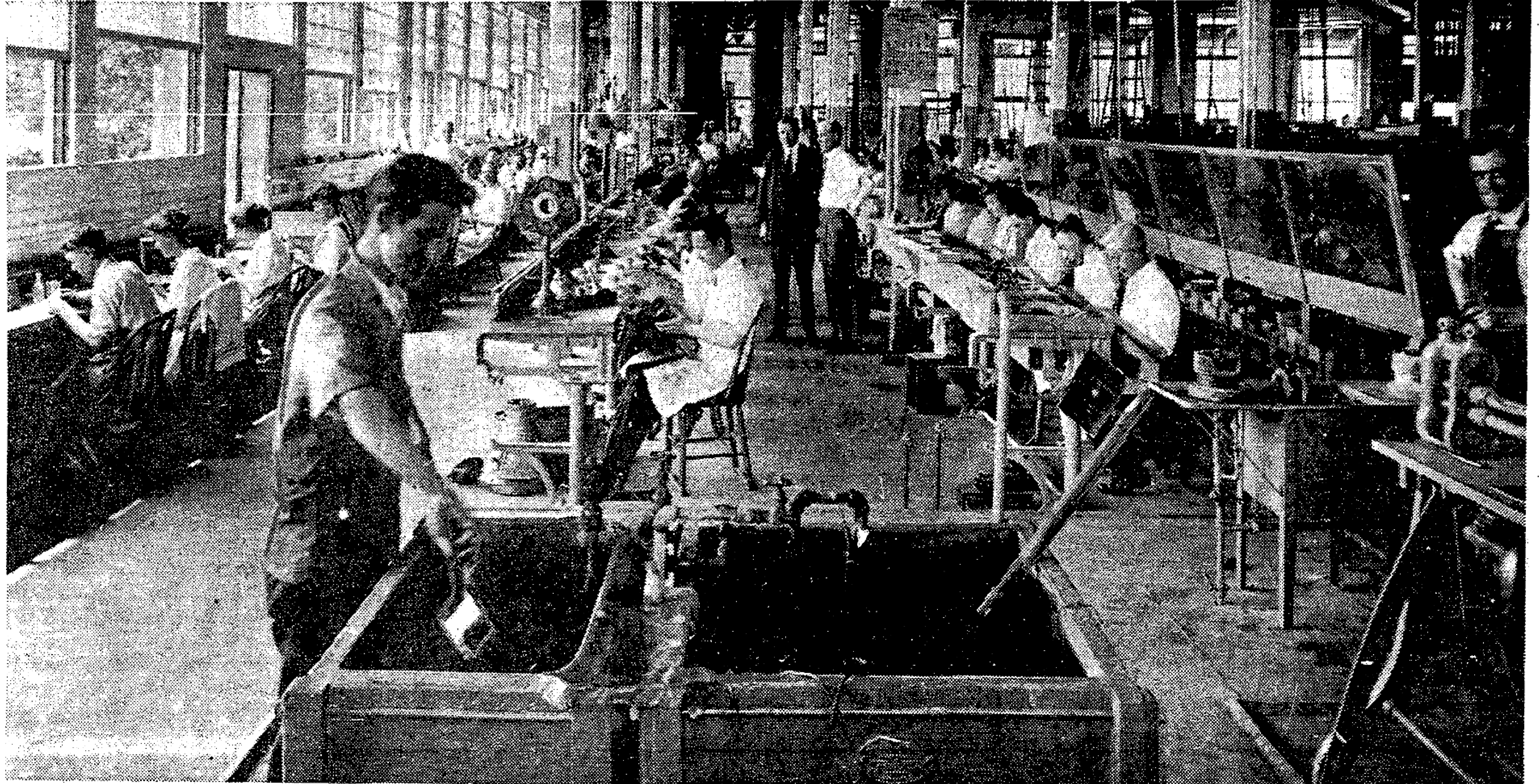
1786-1981: How the jewelry industry grew



1919: Benchworkers at a Providence factory more than 60 years ago. During this time, Rhode Island claimed a third of the country's jewelry market.

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

The heart of the jewelry industry in Rhode Island has always been in making cheap and medium-priced jewelry.

Such jewelry is what gave birth to the industry in the state nearly two centuries ago.

And it is why Rhode Island reigns as the nation's center of costume jewelry manufacturing today.

Historically, it has been a blend of good and bad.

For 100 years, jewelry-making in Rhode Island provided a nearly unbroken string of industrial growth, prosperity and opportunity to owners and workers alike.

But as the factories flourished into the current century, the drive to produce inexpensive jewelry led to an increasing dependence on cheap labor and on women and immigrants as a supply of that labor.

During most of these later years, the jewelry industry of Rhode Island prospered as a center of America's jewelry trade. But for the workers, it became an industry of depressed wages and exploitative labor practices.

Its beginnings were far nobler.

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ALMOST FROM the first, jewelry was being fashioned in colonial America in watch and clock repair shops.

But it was in a Providence goldsmith's shop in the late 1700s that the jewelry industry of this country as it is known today was born.

From that shop, Rhode Island quickly grew to a dominant position in the jewelry trade of the United States.

In 1794, Nehemiah Dodge set himself up in business near the Roger Williams spring on North Main Street in Providence as a goldsmith devoted exclusively to the making of fine jewelry.

Eight years earlier, Dodge's brother, Seril, had opened the first jewelry-making shop in Providence.

But it was Nehemiah Dodge who was to revolutionize jewelry-making. At the time, all jewelry in America was handcrafted from 18-karat gold or sterling silver. Expensive and time-consuming, the manufacture of jewelry was done only on order.

Dodge believed that if he could somehow "coat" less expensive metal with gold, he could produce jewelry more cheaply and for a mass market.

Working on the idea nearly four years, he developed a method of washing or "gilding" a thin sheet of gold onto a cheaper base metal and smoothing it down by passing it through steel rollers.

In 1798, he began producing America's first "cheap" jewelry.

Immediately it was a success.

Capitalizing on the new business, Dodge hired apprentices and began making jewelry for stock — thus becoming the nation's first true jewelry manufacturer as well as its first maker of low-cost jewelry.

Dodge's production and manufacturing methods were soon copied by jewelry makers in New York, Providence and Attleboro, Mass.

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WITHIN 12 years, Providence employed 100 workmen in jewelry, producing $100,000 in stock a year. A decade later, the number of workers had tripled and the annual production of jewelry stock had reached $600,000.

Over the next half-century, the jewelry industry continued its rapid growth in Providence. At first, the shops clung together along North Main, Benefit and Steeple Streets. But by 1850, the district had moved south to Eddy, Broad, Pine and Friendship streets.

By 1860, there were 86 jewelry manufacturers in Rhode Island doing a total of more than $1 million a year in business and employing more people in jewelry-making than any other state.

The industry was a boon for owners and apprentices alike. Welcome Arnold Greene, in his book, "The Providence Plantations, The First Two Hundred and Fifty Years," notes of this period:

"Men who began business with little more than their hands and ingenuity, in a few years owned large shops, private residences, and had a good bank account."

As for those working in the jewelry shops Greene records:

"... No mechanical business paid such high average wages as did the jewelry business when it was prosperous."

Those wages, Greene reports, were as high as $10 a week — then a good salary. Workers in jewelry in those days were reported to be well-dressed and "liberal with their money." They were also, historians report, highly respected in the community, since only people of the best reputation were hired to work with the precious metals involved.

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THE KEY to the Rhode Island's lead in the industry was its production of lower-karat jewelry.

George R. Frankovich, executive director of the Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths of America, gives an account of this period in a history of Rhode Island jewelry he compiled:

"A partnership was often formed; one man would manage the shop doing much of the work by himself while his partner would sell the goods, keep the books, and do the shipping. New York was a popular market and the outside man would make a trip there two or three times a year by horseback or packet boat. Some even ventured as far as Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and New Orleans to sell the highly competitive lower-karat jewelry of Rhode Island."

The industry in Rhode Island steadily grew and prospered until the Panic of 1857.

"Houses tottered and fell one after another, and few there be of the old jewelry concerns who care to say much about the condition of their business affairs during that dreadful year," reports historian Greene.

Prosperity quickly followed the downturn. By 1859 there were 86 jewelry firms in Providence employing 1,764 workers — a high up to then.

The Civil War in the 1860s reduced the number of jewelry houses to 56. Another major depression struck the industry in the Panic of 1873. But the industry quickly recovered from both.

By 1875, 133 firms employed 2,667 workers at wages that were still among the best in manufacturing in the country. Unskilled craftsmen — the lowest wage-earners in the industry — that year were paid an average of $2.63 a day.

"While these wages did not compare with those of skilled craftsmen, they were considered substantially better than those in the other industries of the area," Frankovich records.

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IN THE INDUSTRY'S first century, there were many innovations. In 1846, Thomas Lowe came to Providence from Birmingham, England, with a new process: he "sweated" a thin sheet of gold onto a base metal, then rolled this material into thin sheets from which jewelry was crafted. This was simpler and more economical than the gilding and crude soldering methods formerly used, and permitted the manufacture of even less expensive jewelry.

Later, an early version of the current eletroplating methods was developed, further reducing the cost of manufacturing costume and plated jewelry items.

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BY THE TURN of the century, the jewelry industry in Rhode Island was changing dramatically.

The skilled, well-paid jewelry craftsman — the person who fashioned jewelry from the base metal to the finished product — was phased out.

In his place came toolmakers, die cutters and machine operators and a need for a vast work force of unskilled laborers, people to sit at benches repeating one assembly task thousands of times a day.

The advent of simple power machinery to cut and shape the basic components of jewelry items was largely responsible for the change. It was also responsible for the rise of a jewelry findings industry to provide manufacturers with the basic metal cuttings and component jewelry parts.

Manufacturers no longer needed to make each piece of jewelry from scratch. With mass-production techniques, the largely unskilled labor pool could effectively solder, link or otherwise assemble the pieces.

Jewelry production exploded.

The 1900 census listed 214 jewelry manufacturing firms employing 7,162 workers and producing goods valued at $13,320,620. Providence had 207 of these firms. Seven were in Pawtucket.

Five years later, employment jumped to 8,471 and production value shot over $24 million. The growth generally continued through 1919 before leveling.

By 1922, Rhode Island claimed a third of the country's jewelry market.

Meanwhile, jewelry production was moving out of small shops and into large factory complexes. The former FitzGerald Building on Eddy Street, which opened in 1878, was the first major building in the nation devoted to jewelry production. One of the biggest jewelry complexes in the country later became the Kent & Stanley building in Providence.

More innovations kept Rhode Island in the forefront of the industry.

In 1910, the George F. Berkander Company in Providence manufactured the world's first celluloid jewelry. Within a decade, the buttons, pins and related "articles of feminine adornment" he made from celluloid were being sold across America.

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WORKING CONDITIONS did not improve with the new growth.

The new wave of unskilled workers and the availability of component parts from the findings houses led to the development of a cottage jewelry industry in the state.

As early as 1890, home labor operations began appearing.

Providence Magazine, the Board of Trade Journal, matter-of-factly noted the development in a 1922 article on the history of the industry in Rhode Island.

During the day, it reported, benchworkers would labor eight or more hours in the factories and buy component jewelry parts on the side. At night they would assemble the parts at homes.

"Pretty soon the wives and children were worked into this line of business, and eventually, some of the neighbors. The men continued working in the shops, and between the savings from their wages and the profits of the home activities, they were enabled to establish little shops of their own. This will explain why there are now so many little producers of jewelry in Providence," the magazine concluded.

Indeed, by 1922, hundreds of little "job shops" fed the more than 300 jewelry factories in the state. Extensive home labor operations — often involving mothers and their children — also continued to feed work to the factories.

Edgar M. Docherty, then president of the New England jewelry manufacturing group, maintained in a 1922 interview with the *Journal-Bulletin* that the home labor operations were the manner in which "a large number of Armenians, Italians, Greeks, Syrians and others" were seeking to establish their own shops.

"In a short time the whole family is engaged in the (home) work, and gradually relatives and friends are added and then a small shop is opened."

Docherty credited such labor as a manner in which immigrant workers, if they toiled hard and long enough, could eventually establish themselves as jewelry firm owners.

Some, indeed, did. But the labor was exploitative and riddled with abuse. The work went to homeworkers because they would do it cheaper than minimally paid unskilled factory or job shop labor. Homes were turned into miniature factories, and housewives and their children were often the labor source.

Such labor is the hallmark of a sweatshop industry, and clearly that was what the industry was becoming. Wages, once good, dropped to the lowest in industrial manufacturing. And working conditions dropped with them.

The factories depended heavily on women and immigrants to fill work needs. Women, routinely paid less than men, comprised 55 percent of the work force by 1930.

In 1933, the jewelry industry in Rhode Island was ordered to comply with wage codes under the National Industrial Recovery Act which set 32½ cents as a minimum hourly wage for all but a few.

One estimate at the time was that the order would double salaries at many plants.

Industry leaders vowed to comply. Indeed, the Providence-based New England Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Asociation, formed in the early part of the century, became the national code authority for the NRA.

But three years later, in 1936, the first extensive look at factory wages in the state's jewelry industry showed a massive failure to comply with the wage code.

Sixty-six percent of factory laborers in the jewelry industry were found to be earning less than 32½ cents an hour demanded under he NRA code.

Some factory workers in Rhode Island jewelry plants were found to be earning as little as 3.6 cents an hour. (By comparison, the nation's average manufacturing wage at the time was 56.4 cents an hour.)

Nearly all the lowest wage earners were women.

The national code had also required time-and-a-third pay for work over 40 hours in any one week. But the wage survey found only one out of 150 jewelry firms actually paid overtime rates.

The survey, ordered by state labor officials because of a flood of complaints from workers about low wages and long hours, also noted that work practices in the industry conspired to keep employee wages low.

Piece-rate — the paying of employees based on the amount of assembly work done in a given hour — was sharply criticized. The practice, still widely used, is supposed to reward productive workers with higher pay.

But the wage study concluded that the piece rates across the industry were set so low that many workers could not earn code minimum.

Further, the survey disclosed, the average jewelry firm regularly laid off 55 percent of its full-time employees during slack seasons in the year, thus further lowering annual wages.

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AS DAMAGING a picture of the industry as *the study painted, it did not look at the massive* home labor system feeding the factories even cheaper work. Child labor wages as low as a few cents an hour and late-night work in crowded tenements produced an outcry against the work.

In 1936, the same year as the wage survey of 150 jewelry firms, a state law was passed to sharply reduce homework.

The following year, a mandatory wage order was issued restricting homework to handicapped people with state licenses.

But in fact, homework was never to be wiped out.

State labor officials had more success in the factories. By 1936, the NRA codes had expired. But labor officials — citing results of their wage survey — instituted a 30-cents-an-hour minimum wage for jewelry work in 1937.

Because of its history of low wages, jewelry was the first industry covered by Rhode Island minimum wage laws.

Though the state minimum wage was slightly lower than the federal NRA code had demanded, it was more effective. Within a year, wages throughout the industry generally met minimum standards.

But in the four decades since, they have remained among the lowest industrial wages in the nation. Abusive piece-rate systems and regular massive layoffs have continued as well.

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WAGES WERE NOT the only things studied in the late 1930s. In 1936 the state Division of Industrial Hygiene surveyed health conditions in the industry.

The survey concluded that "various substances of a toxic nature are used in the industry, and that about 34 percent of the exposures to such substances, or hazardous conditions were in a classification which needed further study or improvement."

Another survey, in 1938, listed the various manufacturing processes in jewelry making and the potential for health problems from exposure to those processes.

None were rated as critically hazardous to workers, but examples of questionable ventilation and work conditions were cited throughout the industry.

Yet, none of the 296 firms surveyed had safety directors and only six kept sickness records.

"This is evidence of the lack of interest on the part of plant officials to determine whether sickness is due to a man's occupation or to natural causes," the survey noted.

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THE GROWTH OF the industry in the 1930s and 1940s was irregular. The Depression shook the industry as deeply as it did the country, but by 1939 the industry was booming again.

A shortage of metals needed in jewelry manufacture again caused a downturn in the early years of World War II. But the new firms created at the end of the 1930s and a surge of business near the end of the war propelled the industry back to prosperity.

In 1947, more than 40 percent of America's low-cost jewelry was made in Rhode Island.

In one respect, the industry was the most democratic of private enterprises. The splintering of the work into hundreds of small contract shops and findings houses provided opportunity for hundreds of workers to open their own shops.

As in earlier years, many of those shops thrived and became major manufacturing houses. Such major firms today as Anson Inc., Catamore and American Ring began as small shops.

But as in the earlier part of the century, the industry was marred by abuse of workers.

In the late 1940s, the homework controversy surfaced anew with state and federal investigators declaring it widespread and vowing a crackdown.

In 1948, the *Journal-Bulletin* found homeworkers earning as little as 15 cents an hour and paying 20 percent of that back to the manufacturers as a "trust fund" in case of tax charges.

Such crackdowns, state labor officials concede today, always ended in failure. Home labor continued to be impossible to wipe out because of the host of job shops and manufacturing houses that made up the industry.

Wages and work practices inside the shops and factories continued to be generally poor. In 1956, federal wage inspectors checked 140 Rhode Island jewelry firms and found nearly half to be paying employees less than minimum wage.

Federal wage officials have conducted no surveys of the industry since.

In 1959, however, a state employment survey of the jewelry industry found — as the 1936 labor survey found — that massive numbers of workers were laid off and rehired every few months.

An average jewelry job, according to the survey, was filled three times a year. Sometimes, the job would be filled by the same worker, sometimes not. Women in jewelry work, still about 55 percent of the work force, accounted for 75 percent of the layoffs, according to the survey.

The survey concluded that the jewelry industry was misusing the unemployment system.

The survey was followed by calls for reform. But while the industry enjoyed one of its most prosperous decades in the 1960s, the reforms did not come.

★ ★ ★

TODAY, THE industry is struggling through its worst downturn since World War II. But still, Rhode Island remains the costume jewelry capital of the nation and one of its principal jewelry producers. More than $1.2 billion a year in jewelry is made here in more than 1,200 work places, 700 of which are members of the Manufacturing Jewelers & Silversmiths Association of America.

Many of the larger jewelry firms have moved out of mill complexes into modern plants and have begun offering employee benefit packages similar to those of other industries.

But much of the industry in Rhode Island is as it was decades ago. And many of the oppressive work conditions of those decades remain too.

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

1981: Spray painting jewelry at the Atlantic Mills complex. Rhode Island still reigns as the nation's center of costume jewelry manufacturing.

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The Providence Journal
Published in Providence, R.I. Monday, June 22, 1981 Two Sections/40 Pages 25 Cents; $1.40 per week by carrier
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CITY EDITION

City

THREE PONDS in Roger Williams Park will be dredged this summer after years of neglect. With federal funds available, the city parks department will start the process in motion next week. Page B-1.

State

A CRANSTON MAN whose home has frequently been vandalized in the night says things have become peaceful since the Guardian Angels put in an appearance. Page A-3.

STATE REPUBLICAN CHAIRMAN John A. Holmes Jr. says Democratic "arrogance" in creating patronage jobs could come back to haunt Governor Garrahy at the next election. Page A-3.

SEN. CLAIBORNE PELL says the lack of a strong, international nuclear weapons treaty is in part responsible for the atmosphere that led to Israel's air strike on Iraq's nuclear reactor. Page B-3.

International

POPE JOHN PAUL II will have to stay in the hospital at least two weeks as doctors try to cure a virus infection that has weakened him and caused him to run a persistent fever, his physicians say. Page A-7.

ON THE EVE OF a crucial Soviet Communist Party meeting, the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact forces says the armies under his command will defend Communist rule in Poland. Page A-7.

National

SPORTING "formal attire of 1905," and backed by a crew of extras, Gov. Hugh Gallen of New Hampshire makes his acting debut in a five-hour Japanese documentary. Page B-4.

SEN. BOB DOLE, GOP chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, says House Democrats "may not want a tax cut in 1981," but Rep. Dan Rostenkowski rejects that and cites campaign commitments. Page B-9.

IN AN UNPRECEDENTED move, the postal service may unilaterally increase mail charges to 20 cents a letter. Page A-8.

Financial

A DEEP and persistent economic recession in Britain appears to be taking its toll on Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. Page B-8.

FINANCIAL columnist Sylvia Porter advises planning tax strategy well ahead of the year's end. Page B-8.

Sports

DAVID GRAHAM fires a 67 for a total of 273 and overtakes George Burns, who shot a 73 and finished at 276, for the U.S. Open golf championship. Page A-9.

HENDRICKEN HIGH SCHOOL scores a run in the bottom of the ninth and defeats Barrington, 3-2, capturing the state baseball championship. Page A-9.

THE PAWTUCKET RED SOX' rain-suspended game will resume tonight, complicating plans for tomorrow's resumption of the 32-inning game. Page A-9.

Weather

CLOUDY, chance of showers this morning, and evening. High today in the 80s, low tonight in the mid 60s. Tomorrow, showers likely in the morning, then clearing. Page A-2.

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Socialists in France win clear majority

Associated Press

PARIS — Socialists completed their sweeping turnaround of French politics yesterday as they and their leftist allies won an absolute majority in the National Assembly in the final round of legislative elections.

"The French have expressed their wish for change," Premier Pierre Mauroy said. "This evening, the Socialists registered their greatest victory of the century. The hour of socialism has come."

Their triumphs in the parliamentary elections followed Socialist Francois Mitterrand's victory in the presidential voting last month that brought the left to power for the first time in 23 years.

By winning strong control of the National Assembly for the next five years, Mitterrand will not have to negotiate with the Communists or other parties to push through his programs.

With the results of 479 seats declared, the Socialists and their non-Communist allies had won 282 seats. They needed 246 seats for a majority in the 491-seat assembly. The Socialists had 117 seats in the outgoing assembly.

* * *

THE COMMUNISTS, as expected, fared badly. They won only 43 seats compared to the 86 they had before.

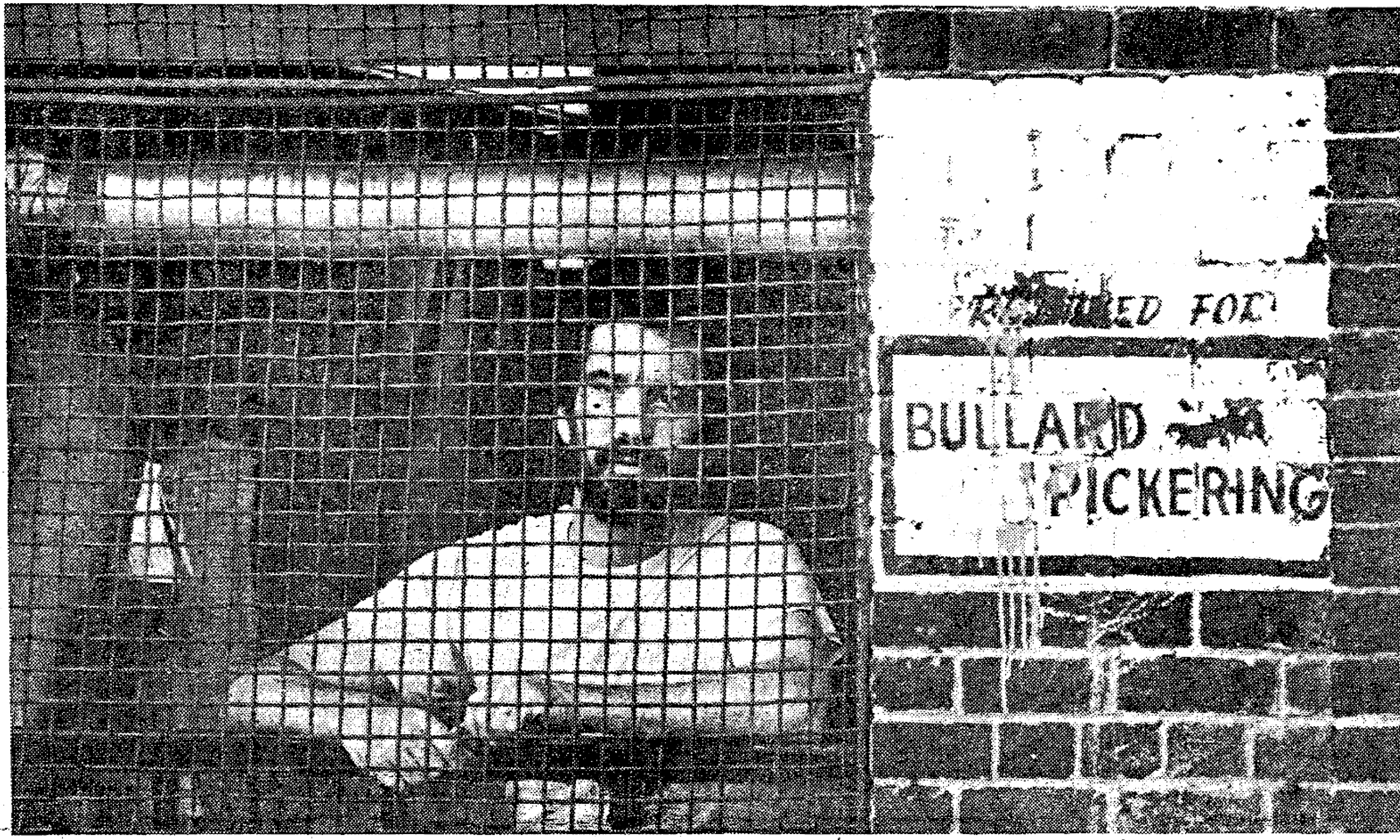
For the two main conservative parties, the Gaullists led by Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac won 82 seats and the Union for French Democracy, the party of former President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, 63. The Gaullists had 155 seats and the UFD 119 in the previous assembly.

The remaining seats were divided among minor parties.

Communist leader Georges Marchais, noting his party's contribution to Mitterrand's election May 10 and to the leftist landslide in the legislative balloting, pledged support for the new government and said he expected Communists to be included in the new Cabinet.

"We don't see any obstacle to the participation of Communist ministers in the government," he said. "The French

Turn to FRANCE, Page A-20



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

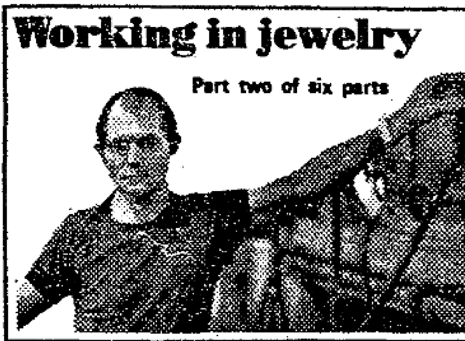
A DAY'S WORK: A worker peers out from a jewelry shop at the Atlantic Mills Complex on Manton Avenue in Providence.

A microcosm of the industry

Mill complex offers insight to variety of companies, problems

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

Working in jewelry
Part two of six parts



PROVIDENCE — Carl Pfanstiehl sits on a weed-covered stone wall across from a complex of jewelry shops in the old Riverside Mill, two packs of Camels bulging from his breast pocket, and a lunchtime bottle of Coke in his hand.

The sun is warm this summer day and Pfanstiehl has come out to sit in it a few minutes until a factory bell calls him back to his job inside.

He is a skinny man, with thin arms and a chalk-white complexion. His left hand and index finger are heavily bandaged from a work accident a few days before. It hurts when he moves it, he says, but he can't afford to stay away from his job another day.

Pfanstiehl is a jewelry worker.

For the last eight years, since he dropped out of high school at 16, he has worked in jewelry shops and manufacturing houses in and around this Olneyville Square neighborhood.

It has not, he says, been an easy life.

"The jewelry business is a tough business for the worker," he says. "Very tough."

"You work a year or so, sometimes just a few months, business gets bad, they lay you off. You go to another place, the same. You never get benefits, holidays — like that."

"If I could change it . . ." he says. "But jewelry's all I know."

The long, deep sound of the workbell comes from inside the mill complex. Pfansteikal gets up and walks toward it.

* * *

THE MILL building at 50 Aleppo St. that Pfanstiehl disappears into this day is home to 16 jewelry firms.

Over three months last summer and early fall the *Journal-Bulletin* visited each firm, observing work practices and conducting interviews with owners and employees.

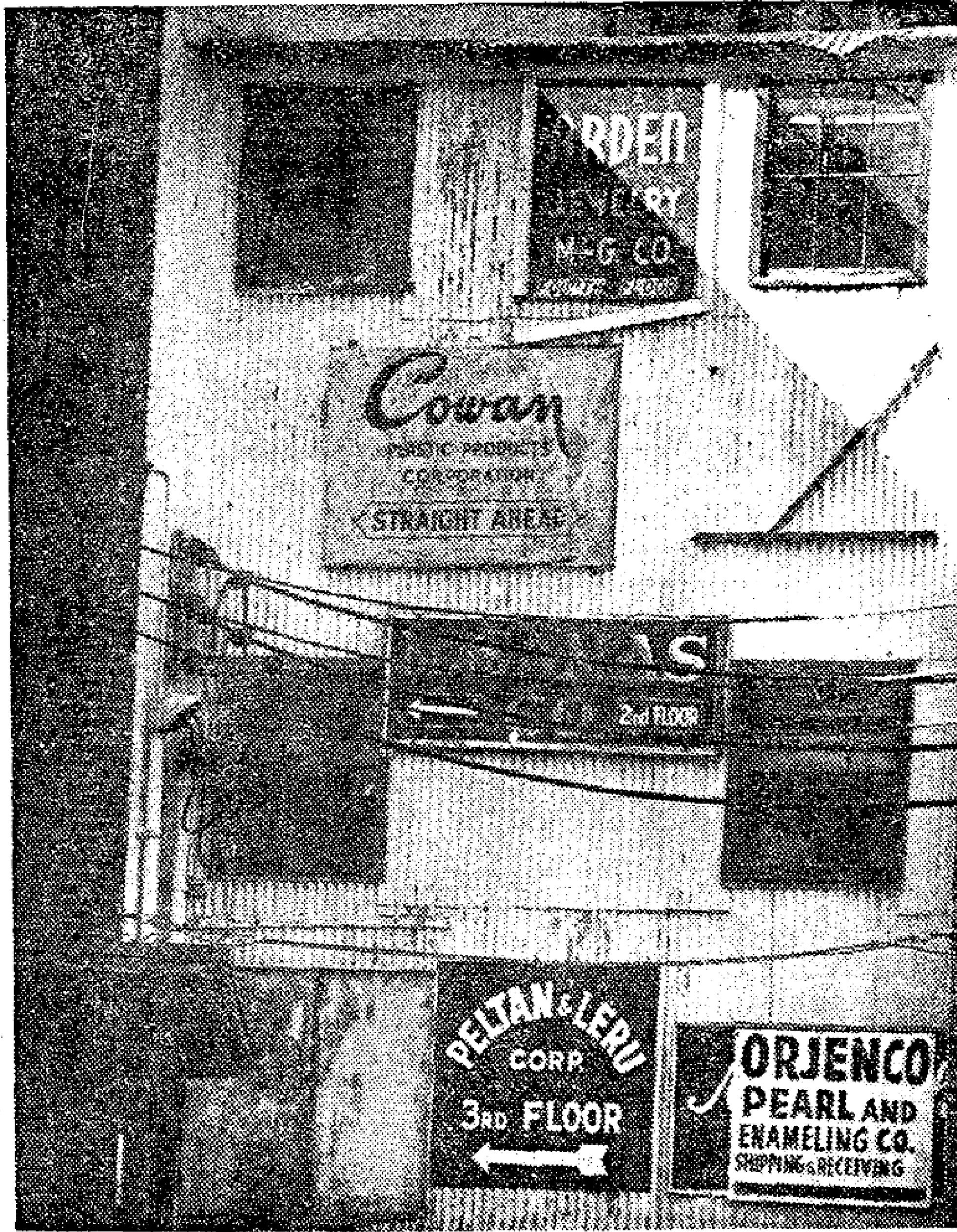
In many ways, the complex is the jewelry industry in miniature.

There are polishing, plating and soldering "job shops" here that employ three or four people, small manufacturing firms that employ a dozen to 50 workers, and one large manufacturing company where more than 100 people work.

A few companies have since moved or closed.

But the conditions found in the shops last fall are representative of the conditions at hundreds of shops in the state. Many — like those at 50 Aleppo St. — are tucked away in old mills, out of

Turn to ALEPPO ST., Page A-4



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by GEORGE E. ROONEY

SIGNS lead the way to 16 jewelry firms at 50 Aleppo Street.

Flight control: midnight limit off

Talks spill over into today in search for a way to avert crippling national strike

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ignoring a midnight deadline, negotiators in the air traffic controller talks searched for a way early today to avert a strike that could ground half the nation's commercial flights later in the day.

The controllers union, meanwhile, said it began polling its nearly 15,000 members on whether to walk off their jobs beginning with the day shift at 7 a.m. Approval was expected to be a formality.

Officials of U.S. Air at Green Airport prepare to cancel most flights. Page A-3

"The strike is on," PATCO President Robert Poli told reporters upon returning to the talks at the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service headquarters last night after a brief dinner break.

Poli added, however, that he would be willing to extend the deadline if there was some movement in the bargaining.

"If I feel we're making progress, we'll talk after midnight," he said.

Just after breaking for dinner, Poli told reporters there was "no progress being made" on specific issues.

Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis and Poli arrived at the offices of a federal mediator in early afternoon, following morning discussions with individual teams.

As federal employees, the 17,000 controllers are forbidden to strike.

* * *

THE WHITE HOUSE kept close tabs on the negotiations. On President Reagan's return from Camp David in mid-afternoon, Mr. Reagan's chief of staff,

Turn to CONTROLLERS, Page A-20

Iran orders arrest of fugitive Bani-Sadr

Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Iran's Parliament overwhelmingly voted fugitive President Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr incompetent to stay in office yesterday, clearing the way for Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to fire the nation's first elected president. Bani-Sadr's arrest was immediately ordered.

As the Majlis, or parliament, vote was announced, violent clashes between Bani-Sadr's supporters and hardline opponents were erupting in the capital city of Tehran and in other Iranian cities, according to news reports.

The vote was a victory for the clergy-led fundamentalists of the Islamic Republican Party. It led the year-long campaign to oust the French-educated economist who was backed by secular leftists and nationalists.

* * *

SPECTATORS packed in the galleries burst into chants of "Death to Bani-Sadr!" when the vote was announced — 177 in favor of declaring the President incompetent, one against and one abstention, according to Tehran Radio.

Several Bani-Sadr supporters boycotted the parliament session but their

Turn to IRAN, Page A-20

11 Mt. Rainier climbers die as ice falls, crashes down 'in blocks the size of cars'

Associated Press

PARADISE, Wash. — Eleven mountain climbers were buried early yesterday when a wall of ice tore off a glacier on Mount Rainier and crashed blocks of ice "the size of cars" onto a group of resting mountaineers, officials said.

Rescuers who reached the scene found no sign of life, and officials expressed little hope that any of the 11 would be found alive.

Larry Henderson, a Mount Rainier National Park ranger, said a group of 29 climbers and guides was resting early yesterday morning at the base of a glacier on the east side of the 14,410-foot peak when a huge wall of ice broke off and crashed down on them.

Most of the party escaped, but 10 climbers and a guide were buried, said the National Park Service ranger.

The spared climbers went back down the mountain. Four persons who returned to the scene of the ice fall briefly saw no sign of life, not even a scrap of clothing or equipment, officials said.

The four rescuers said the falling ice left a swath of rubble 100 yards wide and 70 feet deep, according to Henderson.

Veteran mountain climber Lou Whittaker, whose mountain-guide service had led the ill-fated trek, was leading a 10-member rescue expedition up the mountain yesterday, but was not expected to reach the scene of the ice fall until today.

Bob Dunnagan, the national park's chief ranger, said "hope is very slight because of the depth and width of the ice. There are blocks of ice the size of cars," he said.

* * *

RESCUERS HAD to proceed with extreme caution, because the area was "very dangerous and unstable," said Gary Gregory, the park's information officer.

Army helicopter rescue crews at Fort Lewis near Tacoma were alerted, but could not fly up the mountain because of bad weather which restricted visibility to 50 to 100 feet, Gregory said.

He called the expedition "a routine climb" that departed early yesterday and was to return later the same day.

Henderson, who said he believed the accident was the worst in Mount Rainier's history, said the party consisted of "some concession guide-service people and independent climbers."

Gregory said a number of climbers were with a park concession he identi-

Turn to ICEFALL, Page A-20

Suspect charged in 1 Atlanta slaying

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Wayne B. Williams, a black freelance photographer who has been the subject of intense police surveillance, was arrested yesterday and charged with murder in one of the slayings of 28 young blacks here, officials said.

WILLIAMS

Williams, 23, was charged with murder in the death of Nathaniel Cater, 27, the most recent and oldest of the victims, said Atlanta Public Safety Commissioner Lee P. Brown.

Cater's body was found floating in the Chattahoochee River on May 24, where the bodies of six of the 28 cases being investigated by a special police task force have been found.

Two days after FBI agents and police who had staked out a bridge over the river stopped Williams, Cater's body was found, only a few hundred yards from the bridge.

Police said they heard a splash while

Turn to ATLANTA, Page A-20

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Aleppo Street mill: industry in miniature

Aleppo St.

Continued from Page One

public sight and largely out of public scrutiny.

This mill, a long series of old brick buildings running beside the debris-strewn Woonasquatucket River, was the home of the American Woolen Company before World War II. Last fall its grounds were dirty, its corridors dark and its myriad buildings chopped up into factory space.

Inside, each day, nearly 300 people earned their living making jewelry.

The House of Borrelli

The way to Carl Pfanstiehl's job is through a loading platform in Building 2 and up two flights of narrow, wooden stairs closed off and dark even on this bright summer afternoon.

On the second floor, he walks by signs with peeling letters pointing down an unlighted corridor toward a place called Double B Industries and, farther down, a place called Loupal Originals.

On the third floor, past the locked and windowless door of a company named DVM, he arrives at the House of Borrelli.

Twenty-five people work inside, making what its owner calls a "specialty line" of cheap costume jewelry.

Lately, Pfanstiehl has been assigned to the casting room, where the dust of industrial talcum powder sometimes covers virtually every surface, and where alloy "white metal," mostly lead, is melted in pots with no fans to remove fumes.

This is where he tore his finger open on a casting machine, and where he lost an afternoon's pay because he didn't go right back to work after hospital doctors sewed up the wound.

A week from now — saying he doesn't want to "hassle" with his employer about a return visit to the accident room — he will remove the sutures himself in the Laban Street tenement he shares with his mother.

But Pfanstiehl doesn't think any of this is unusual. "It's just the way it is," he tells you.

* * *

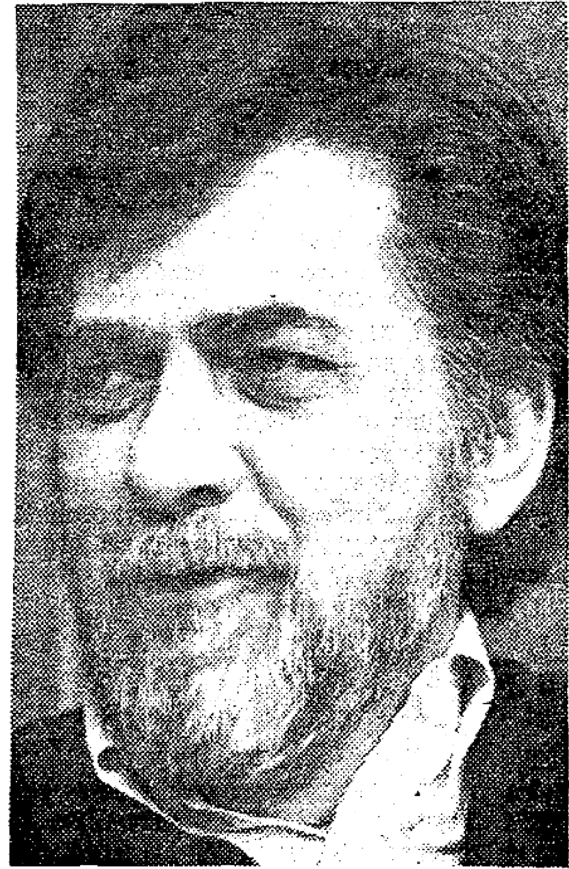
FOR MOST who have worked there, the "way it is" at the House of Borrelli is minimum wages, weekly layoffs and poor if not unhealthy working conditions.

Large chips and little flakes of paint constantly peel from the ceiling, falling into workers' hair and onto their workbenches. At night, the assembly work is covered with old plastic because of the paint chips and because, when it rains, water drips constantly from the roof.

The bathrooms are dirty and smell of urine. The windows of the factory are covered with yellowing plastic, rolled up a few feet because it is summer and workers want air.

There is a sprinkler system in the factory and throughout the mill complex. But Borrelli's — whose aisles are littered with cardboard boxes — shares one floor of its mill building with two other jewelry shops and there is only one exit for the three — the dark, narrow stairway at the front of the factory. Workers at Borrelli's and the owner of DVM next door talk of their constant fear of fire.

At Borrelli's, there is no ventilation in the casting room to remove talc dust or metal fumes. In the spray room, workers say they must buy their own surgical masks to keep



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by THOMAS D. STEVENS

PERRY BORRELLI: "I know what it's like to be a jewelry worker. . . . That's why we try to give everybody a break."

from inhaling paint mist. Basic first-aid equipment such as bandages, three employees say, is available only when the employees buy and pay for them themselves.

When it's lunch time, workers often eat at their benches. When they are sick and cannot work and even sometimes when they are injured, they get no pay. Holidays for most workers are payless days off.

Workers who have been in the factory a year get a week's paid vacation, the owner boasts. But more than 200 people a year fill just 25 jobs at Borrelli's. Fewer than 10 qualify for paid vacation.

Carl Pfanstiehl, who has worked eight months by vacation time, isn't one of them. Like thousands of other jewelry workers in Rhode Island, he will stand in line at the unemployment office for his "vacation" pay.

* * *

SIX CURRENT and former production employees interviewed by the *Journal-Bulletin* complain of these and other conditions at the small factory.

Mildred Vaughn, 20 and married to an ex-Marine out of the service only a few weeks, and Doris Vaughn, her 16-year-old sister-in-

Working in jewelry

law, have just walked out of the plant, final paychecks in their hands. They were benchworkers for a month, but quit because Borrelli's stopped issuing payroll stubs with the checks.

"How we supposed to know what we're being paid?" Mildred asks. "They just give you a check and a little piece of paper with some numbers on it." The numbers, she says they were told, are payroll deductions and wages, though without a breakdown of hours or what the deductions are for.

Back at their homes, they show a reporter several pieces of adding-machine paper they say they were given by Borrelli's as a wage statement the last few weeks.

There are several numbers on the tapes, but no indication of what they represent.

The unexplained deductions, the Vaughns declare, were the final straw. Both talk of the dirty shop conditions, unclean bathrooms, paint chips in their hair and water dripping from the ceiling.

"There's another thing," Doris says. "The shouting. They were always shouting. Not so much at people, but at things that always seemed to go wrong in there."

There is a lot of swearing some days, George Menzivarz nods, and always there is yelling. "They shouldn't yell at people like that all the time, but they do. I think they're very nervous," he said.

He is a 22-year-old native of Honduras hired early last summer as a polisher at $3.25 an hour. Despite the low pay and shouting, he says, he liked his job and hoped it would be permanent. Ralph, Borrelli's chief polisher, who asked that his last name not be used, said Menzivarz was a "good kid" and a hard worker.

Still, Menzivarz was laid off after five weeks with only a day's notice.

* * *

OUTSIDE BORRELLI'S, a permanent help-wanted sign is attached to the factory wall. Inside, in a paneled office with pretty displays of pins and bracelets, Melvin Bunson explains that a steady supply of new labor is needed to keep the shop running smoothly.

Bunson, Borrelli's plant manager, complains that jewelry workers are unreliable, often lazy, and frequently walk out on their jobs. Hard times in the jewelry industry, he says, are correcting that.

"My crew's getting better all the time. They realize they have to work to keep their jobs," Bunson declares.

Many of his workers, he is told, complain of layoffs and of supervisors who yell and treat them without consideration or respect.

He waves his hand in the direction of the factory. "Most of these people aren't ready for a personal touch," he says.

* * *

PERRY BORRELLI, the owner, is less harsh in his appraisal of jewelry workers. A husky man with dark bushy eyebrows and a full beard, he began as a jewelry worker himself, became a model maker for Imperial Pearl, and opened his own shop in 1962.

"I know what it's like to be a jewelry worker. I know it's hard," he says. "That's why we try to give everybody a break."

He agrees that factory conditions "are not the best." But he blames much of it on the building, which he notes he does not own, and insists that his work practices violate no laws.

Masks are not needed in the spray room, he says, because fans in the spray booths are "adequate" to remove all fumes. While he has stopped issuing pay stubs with his checks, he continues, his office staff will readily answer any worker's questions about deductions.

Borrelli confirms the lack of casting room ventilation and admits that the casting room is often filled with talcum powder dust. But the dust, he says, is not harmful.

"You ever see somebody standing all day pounding bags of talcum together? It's dusty. Sure. But it's only talc. There's nothing in talc that will hurt you," he says.

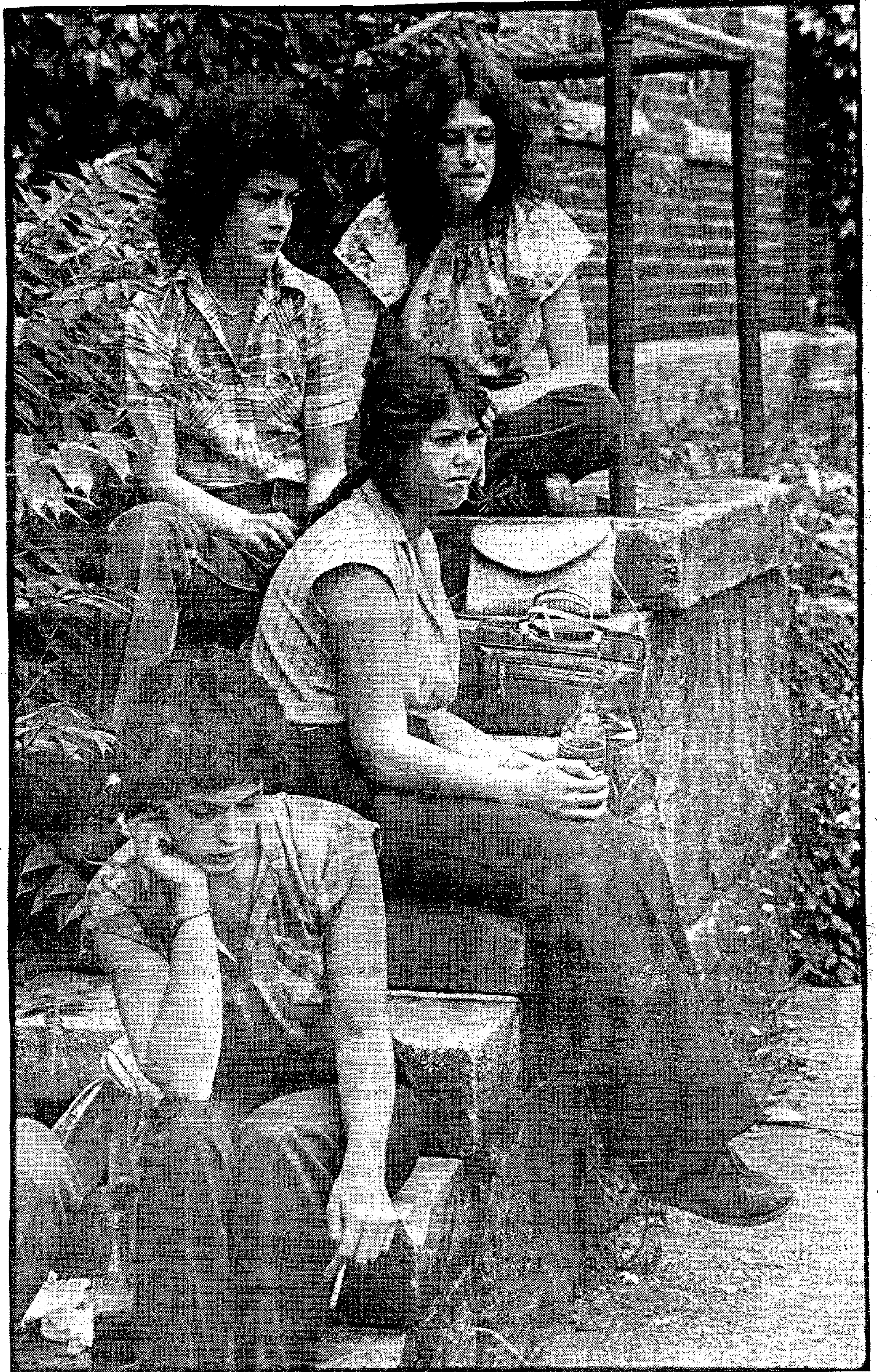
He adds that there is no need for ventilation over the casting pots either because "it's just white metal" that's being melted. "There aren't any fumes that amount to anything anyway," he says.

Borrelli says that three years earlier, when he rented the entire second floor as well as the place on the third floor, he had fans in the casting room and exhaust hoods over each casting pot. But he said workers complained "of drafts and getting bursitis and that sort of thing." So he took the fans out and when the operation was moved to the third floor, "We didn't bother hooking any of the stuff up."

Five years ago, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspected Borrelli's and cited it for more than two dozen violations of health and safety codes — including lack of protective equipment in the casting room.

For more than a year, Borrelli fought the fines attached to the inspection; he paid them only under threat of court action. OSHA revisited Borrelli's a month after its initial inspection and reported no evidence of protective equipment having been ordered or purchased for the casting room.

Despite this, OSHA records show no further inspections.



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

ALEPPO STREET: Workers from Color Glass and Design take a lunch break.

Double B Industries

Double B Industries is the kind of place people never just happen by. One floor below Borrelli's, signs direct you down a dimly lighted hallway of half-painted bricks.

A left off the hallway puts you on a wooden landing, overlooking the entrance to the shop. It is unmarked except for a dozen or so old chemical barrels in front of a solid wood door, and a note scribbled in red ink on a wall beside the door that advises: "Ring Bell."

There is no bell beside the sign. A hand-drawn arrow running 10 feet across the wall points to the bell. Pushing it brings someone to unlock the door.

Inside, Rose Jamgochian, a stout woman who has spent 40 years in jewelry, is busy sitting at a bench stringing heart-shaped lockets onto a metal plating rack.

Another woman, the one who opened the door, takes a seat across the bench from her and begins doing the same thing. They are alone.

"We got employees," she explains. "But they drift in on Mondays, you know. They had a bad weekend and it takes them time to get over it. So Mondays they just drift in."

Double B is what is known in the industry as a "job shop" — a jewelry firm that specializes in one process. Double B's specialty is electroplating — putting a gold or silver finish on white metal jewelry pieces created by other firms.

The shop is owned by Mrs. Jamgochian's brother, Sarkis Bedrosian, and by Perry Borrelli. It is a large, L-shaped room with the plating operation along a back wall and the racking and stringing benches near the front door.

Mrs. Jamgochian takes a reporter past a stack of chemical barrels, some with cyanide markings on them, but most with no visible markings at all. "Everything's stored right," she says.

There are no fans or vents over the electroplating tanks, though there is at least one huge fan on one wall. There are fire escapes along the back of the shop, but only one staircase exit. Like Borrelli's, that exit is the dark, narrow staircase entrance.

During a later visit to Double B, a reporter and photographer watch as a plater gingerly steps over broken floorboards around the heated tanks.

The plater, Javier Gomez, said the holes had been there since he started working nearly six

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by RICHARD BENJAMIN

SARKIS BEDROSIAN, owner of Double B Industries in Providence: "I'd never ask anyone to work in conditions I wouldn't work in myself."

months before. Though he agrees it would be simple and inexpensive to nail new boards into place, he concludes: "I guess nobody thought of it."

Gomez, 27 and a native of the Dominican Republic, says he would like to see the floorboards fixed. "It's dangerous," he nods.

But he has few other complaints.

"I like my job because it keeps me moving. It's good for my health. It keeps me in shape," he says.

* * *

GOMEZ' VIEW OF Double B Industries is not widely shared by others who have worked there or in neighboring shops and factories.

Indeed, the owner of one neighboring firm, a half-dozen employees in another firm, the landlord of the mill complex and a former Double B supplier all tell of a constant stream of profanity and shouts coming from this plating shop.

Estelle Sylvester, a former employee with three children to support, says she was hired to rack and string jewelry at $2.90 an hour — minimum wage at the time.

"I used to rack, but mostly it was unracking jewelry and dipping. I had to take the racks and dip them in the tanks just like the men did. They were heavy and the fumes were awful. They didn't give you any gloves or aprons or anything. I ruined every pair of pants I wore there," she says.

Miss Sylvester says the workers used to "get high all the time" from working over the degreasing tank, where jewelry pieces are lowered into the heated tank of trichloroethylene.

A former Double B plater, now chief plater at one of Rhode Island's better known manufacturers, insists the shop was the most marginally-run plating operation he'd been in — with stringers called on to do plating chores and a lack of protective equipment such as rubber gloves and aprons.

"They had girls doing work on the line. They

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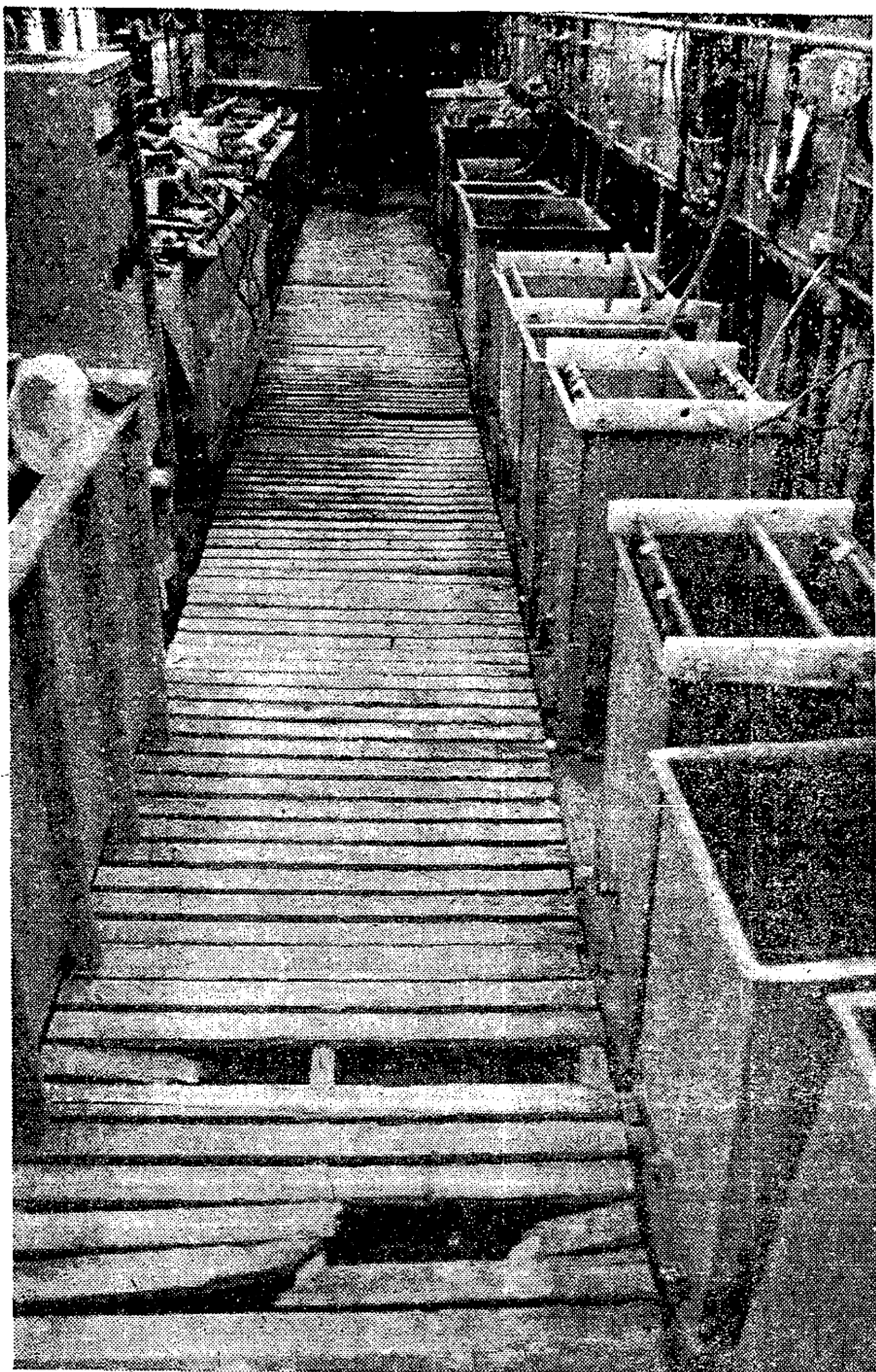
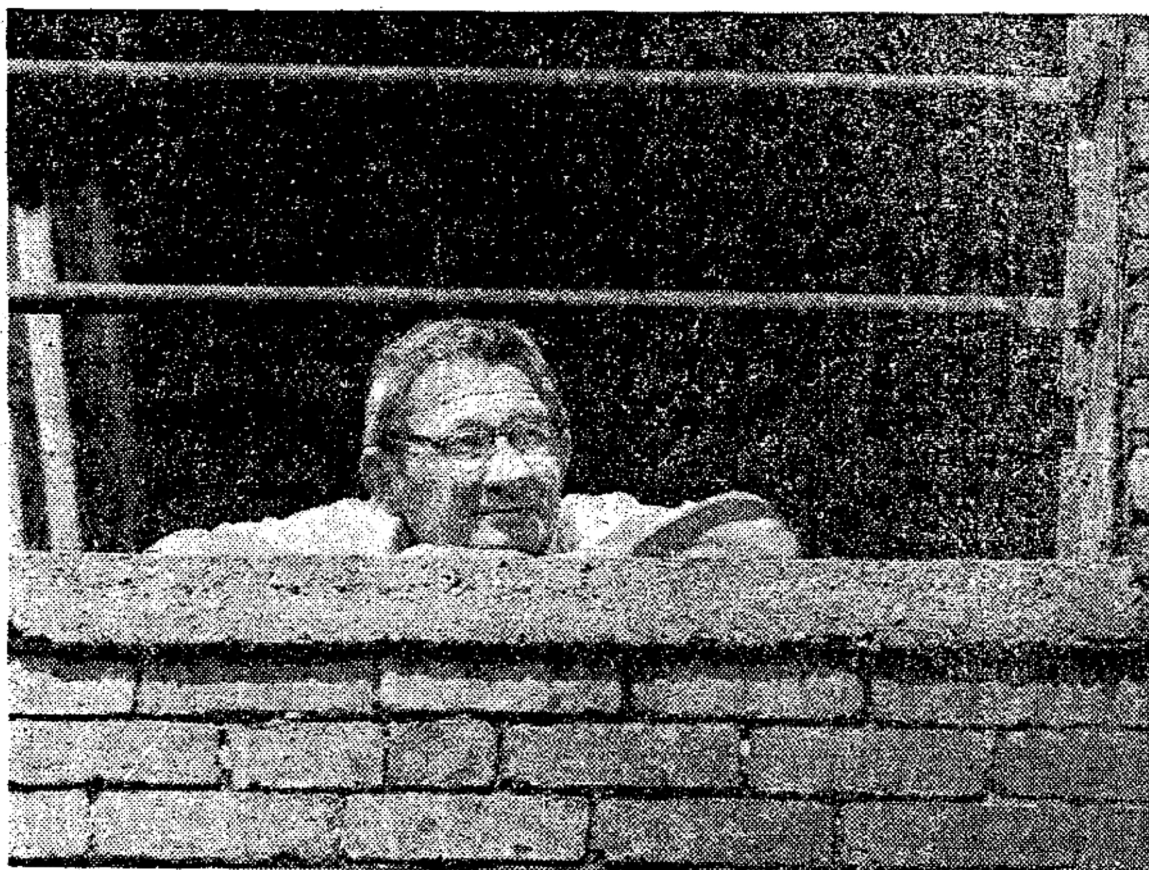


—Journal-Bulletin Photo by RICHARD BENJAMIN

SAFETY HAZARD: Missing floor boards are dangerous obstacles next to bubbling tanks of acid and cyanide at Double B Industries.

—Journal-Bulletin Photos by BOB THAYER

BENCHWORKERS: Nina Carvalho, above, mother of the head of Colonial Industries: "I couldn't sit at home and do nothing. . . . Besides, it helps my son." Below, another worker in the Aleppo Street complex.



—Journal-Bulletin Photos by BOB THAYER

SUMMER ON ALEPPO STREET: Open windows are often the only ventilation in some small manufacturing companies. Above, a worker grabs a breath of air. Below, a worker at Premier Metal Specialties.

Aleppo St.

Continued from Previous Page

were supposed to be stringers, but they were plating. None of them knew what the hell they were working with. From that point, it was dangerous, too," he said.

★ ★ ★

MRS. JAMGOCHIAN and her brother, Sarkis Bedrosian, denied these and other charges in an interview late last summer. "The safety and health of our employees is important to us," Bedrosian said. "I'd never ask anyone to work in conditions I wouldn't work in myself."

What about all the stories of a constant stream of profanity coming from the operation?

"There's some shouting from time to time," he says. "There may be some swearing from time to time. It's a factory."

Mrs. Jamgochian also denied charges of poor working conditions.

On two visits to the plating shop, however, a reporter saw stringers using old barrels of cyanide as trash receptacles — a move Health Department officials say is extremely dangerous for health and safety reasons. Another cyanide barrel was filled with discarded pieces of metal on the landing by the front door. The missing floor boards near the bubbling tanks of acid and cyanide were a blatant safety hazard.

On one trip to the shop, a reporter observed two young children at the benches. One, a red-haired boy in a colored T-shirt, appeared to be stringing jewelry. The other, a slightly older boy who appeared to be about 12, was carrying a rack of jewelry from the benches to an area where it was stacked for plating.

The two were again observed sweeping the floor of the factory on a return visit later that same day. At quitting time, they left the plant together.

"We weren't working or anything. She's our mother," one of the youths said when questioned by a reporter.

Rose Jamgochian said the two are the sons of a longtime employee.

"They weren't working," she said. "They were spending the day here because their mother couldn't get a babysitter for them. They're better off here than alone at home, aren't they?" she said.

Loupal Originals

Liz Florio, in her mid-20s, sits at an electric welding machine inside Loupal Originals and demonstrates how bangles should be sealed together.

Expertly, she slips pieces of curled steel into the machine, presses the cut ends together and melts them together with a quick jolt of 250 volts of electricity.

Five seconds a piece. Twelve pieces a minute. She does it fast and with such precision that the weld leaves barely a mark on the jewelry.

Occasionally, the operation leaves marks on people. Every time Miss Florio seals a bracelet, sparks fly from the machine and smoke curls up to her face.

"A lot of people are afraid of it," she says of the job. "If you don't do it just right, the sparks fly all over. They burn your slacks. I've ruined slacks. And every once in a while they'll hit your face."

The women who work the welding machines, she explains, are supposed to wear protective glasses. But, she smiles, she never has and neither do most women. Nobody's eyes have ever been hurt at Loupal's, she says, but women frequently suffer "little burn marks" on their legs, arms and face.

Victor DeCesare, the owner, nods in agreement.

"The sparks can be a problem," he admits, "but it's not a dangerous job."

To minimize burns, each machine is fitted with plywood between the welding point and the worker, he explains. If the weld is applied right — and most times even if isn't — the wood will catch the sparks, he says.

What about the smoke? "There isn't anything in those fumes. It's just heat. We don't use solder here," he says. "The metal joins the metal."

Barrels with thousands of neatly stacked bracelets waiting to be polished and painted are clustered all over this jewelry plant. There are no customers for them. So there has been no need for women to weld more.

Miss Florio — Loupal's bookkeeper, secretary, factory worker and "Girl Friday" — is only demonstrating how it is when things are busy.

★ ★ ★

DeCESARE IS a congenial man who trained to be a engineer, but whose uncle brought him into the jewelry business 16 years ago and eventually turned Loupal Originals over to him.

Like Double B Industries just down the hall, the entrance to Loupal Originals is marked only by a windowless door and a doorbell.

Unlike Double B, however, it is a manufacturing house, not a job shop. Bangles — brightly painted metal bracelets — are made, soldered together, painted, boxed and shipped from the 40,000-square-foot plant behind the door.

In the spring, DeCesare says, he had 20 women working full-time. Now, at midsummer, it is slow.

"I laid off the last of them on Friday," he says. "We had a sprayer here, he'd been with us 20 years, since we started. I had to let him go Friday. He was the last," DeCesare says.

"It wasn't easy for him and it wasn't easy for me. I don't like to lay people off. But, well, if I kept him and the others on for another couple of months waiting this thing out and I didn't ship, I'd be out of business."

Despite the layoffs and empty factory this day, DeCesare says there are enough orders coming to pay the bills and keep the factory open until better times arrive.

His firm's net profit in 1979 was "in the neighborhood" of $100,000. He adds that he did not spend it on new cars, trips or expensive homes, as he says many other jewelry shop owners do. He was able to "shrink" his overhead fast enough to avoid any large loss when the orders slowed.

"If I get a big order in today, I can have a full staff of girls in tomorrow to get it out. It's the kind of flexibility that's going to see us through these bad times," he says.

The "flexibility" means his employees live on unemployment insurance as much as on paychecks from Loupal's. One week they work, the next week or so they collect unemployment, then there is another week of work.

DeCesare says he doesn't like using the unemployment system that way. He has always protected his "core" of workers before, never timed them or stood over them yelling for more production. And, he adds, he's always given holidays.

Pay at Loupal Originals is minimum wage or close to that level, he admits, and there are few fringe benefits. "But that's jewelry," he says.

"This is a good place to work," says Miss Florio. "I worked in two other jewelry factories before I came here and compared to this place, they were sweatshops."

"It's a cutthroat business," DeCesare agrees. "A very bad business for a lot of these workers."

Color Glass and Design

Near the end of a summer workday Betty Godfrey drives along the front of 50 Aleppo St. looking for Color Glass and Design.

A reporter waiting outside the loading platform by Building 2 goes with her to the back of the complex where the pavement is cracked and sprouting weeds.

Color Glass and Design is there, a small place on the first floor of the Building 1-A, with two plywood-covered doors and plywood-covered windows.

A small sign with the name of the firm is beside one door. It is dwarfed by a much larger sign above, advertising a polishing firm upstairs.

Mrs. Godfrey parks and waits to pick up her niece from her first day of work. Seconds before her niece emerges, a gust of wind sends the large sign crashing directly in front of the door through which employees have begun to leave.

They step over the old sign as if it has always been there.

"I'm not sure this is the kind of place I want my niece working in," Mrs. Godfrey says.

Despite her misgivings, Mrs. Godfrey's niece, Nancy, continues to work at Color Glass and Design through the summer, earning minimum wage with no benefits.

She is 18, quiet and shy. She attended Rhode Island Junior College for a year, she says, but will not go back for a second year until she makes some money.

She hopes to do better at Color Glass and Design than at her last job. That job — her first in jewelry — was at R & A Manufacturing in the CIC Complex near downtown. She worked there two weeks before the plant owner locked the doors one morning and put up a sign saying he had gone out of business.

Nancy never did get paid. Job Service — the state-run placement service that had sent her to R & A Manufacturing — sent her to Color Glass and Design for a second try.

"I need a job, so I've got to stay here," she says. "It's not that bad, I guess."

The only problem, she adds, is the overpowering odor of paint and epoxy that filled Color Glass her first day. A fan in the small workroom was turned on only half the day. "Maybe tomorrow will be better," she says.

The next day is not better. Neither is the next week, nor the next month. But as the weeks pass, Nancy says she grows accustomed to the odors.

"I get a headache once in a while. Some days — when they don't turn the fan on — I get a little sick by the end of the day. But it's a good place, I guess." At least, she says, she is paid fully and on time.

★ ★ ★

DAVID TUDONE, an officer of Color Glass and Design, is suspicious when people ask questions about his plant. Although he refuses to let a reporter into the plant, he agrees to be interviewed in his small paneled office just inside the locked front door.

The odor of what smells like epoxy resins is overpowering, even in the office, and nearly gags the reporter. But Tudone dismisses it. "That isn't epoxy you smell," he says. It is, he says, polyester, a chemical used in the casting process he has formulated for a new type of plastic jewelry. Federal limits on exposure are

Continued on Next Page

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The Providence Journal

Published in Providence, R.I. Tuesday, June 23, 1981 Four Sections/52 Pages 25 Cents; $1.40 per week by carrier
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CITY EDITION

City

MAYOR Vincent A. Cianci Jr. confers with the Providence Review Commission on the impending layoff of 122 additional workers on prospects of reducing the city budget by $2-million. Page C-1.

State

A FEDERAL JURY IN BOSTON hears final arguments and the judge's charge in the trial of former R.I. House Speaker Edward P. Manning, then retires for the night. Page A-3.

A THREE-ALARM FIRE that investigators say was the result of arson destroys the Turilli Furniture Co. at 400 Warwick Ave., Warwick, and its $300,000 inventory. Page A-3.

NEW ENGLAND, reeling from higher and higher oil prices, is finding other ways to slake its thirst for energy, a new report says. Page A-3.

National

PROSECUTORS LINE UP witnesses for the first hearing for Wayne Williams, 23, who is charged with killing the last victim in the baffling string of 28 Atlanta slayings. Page A-2.

THERE ARE FIVE feasible ways to base the MX strategic missile system, but all carry serious problems, congressional researchers say. Page A-10.

International

AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI dismisses Iranian President Bani-Sadr, right, from office, then appeals to the fugitive ex-chief of state to return as "writer and thinker." Page A-9.

PRIME MINISTER Menachem Begin of Israel says the United States had given him a document expressing American concern that Iraq was planning to use its reactor to manufacture nuclear weapons. Page A-9.

COMMUNIST PARTY Chairman Hua Guofeng, who tried for a time to retain his post, resigns, admitting "serious errors" of leadership. Page A-9.

Financial

YIELDS on Treasury bills rise at the government's weekly auction. Page B-7.

AVNET says it's considering the sale of its Carol Cable Co. division. Page B-7.

Accent

THEY DON'T write 'em like "My Fair Lady" anymore. The Lerner and Loewe classic is now playing in Boston with Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins. Unfortunately, his performance is only fair. Page C-4.

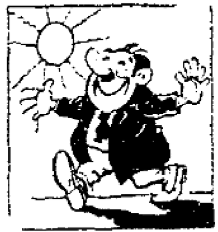
Sports

THE PAWTUCKET RED SOX and Rochester Red Wings resume their 32-inning suspended game tonight at McCoy Stadium. Page B-1.

FLORENCE ARTHAUD of France becomes the first woman skipper to finish the Observer-Europe 1 double-handed yacht race. Page B-1.

LAURA CARSON of Point Judith captures the medal in the Rhode Island Women's golf championship, with a five-over par 77. Page B-2.

Weather



SUNNY, WINDY and less humid. High around 80. Tonight clear. Low in upper 50s. Tomorrow sunny. High around 80. Northwest winds 15 to 25 mph, diminishing tonight. Page A-2.

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Sciarra juror was contacted, judge told

By KAREN ELLSWORTH
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — State police detectives are investigating an unsuccessful attempt to influence the vote of a juror in Rudolph E. Sciarra's murder accessory trial, sources told the *Journal-Bulletin* yesterday.

The incident happened before the trial began, sources said. The juror, who had been tentatively seated on the panel but not yet sworn in, told Superior Court Judge Francis M. Kiely about the approach and was relieved of service on the jury, the sources said.

They said the juror was not offered any money.

Deputy Atty. Gen. Susan E. McGuirl yesterday confirmed that the incident took place, but would not comment on it. She said the matter is under investigation, and no decision has been made on whether to bring charges against anyone involved.

Miss McGuirl is acting as attorney general while Atty. Gen. Dennis J. Roberts 2nd attends a national state attorneys general conference in Wyoming this week.

* * *

NEITHER MISS McGUIRL nor the sources would identify the juror involved or the "intermediary" who approached him.

Asst. Atty. Gen. Henry Gemma, who prosecuted the case, declined comment yesterday, as did Sciarra's lawyers, Joseph A. Bevilacqua Jr. and Kirk Y. Griffin.

Sciarra, 56, of Johnston, who has been identified by police as a top figure in organized crime in Rhode Island, was convicted Saturday of aiding in the 1965 murder of Raymond "Baby" Curcio.

Nicholas A. Palmigiano, a former mob hitman and convicted murderer who is now in the federal Witness Protection Program, testified during the two-week trial that Raymond L. S. Patriarca, the reputed head of organized crime in New England, ordered him to kill Curcio and

Turn to JUROR, Page A-14

Air-traffic controllers OK pact, avert strike

The New York Times

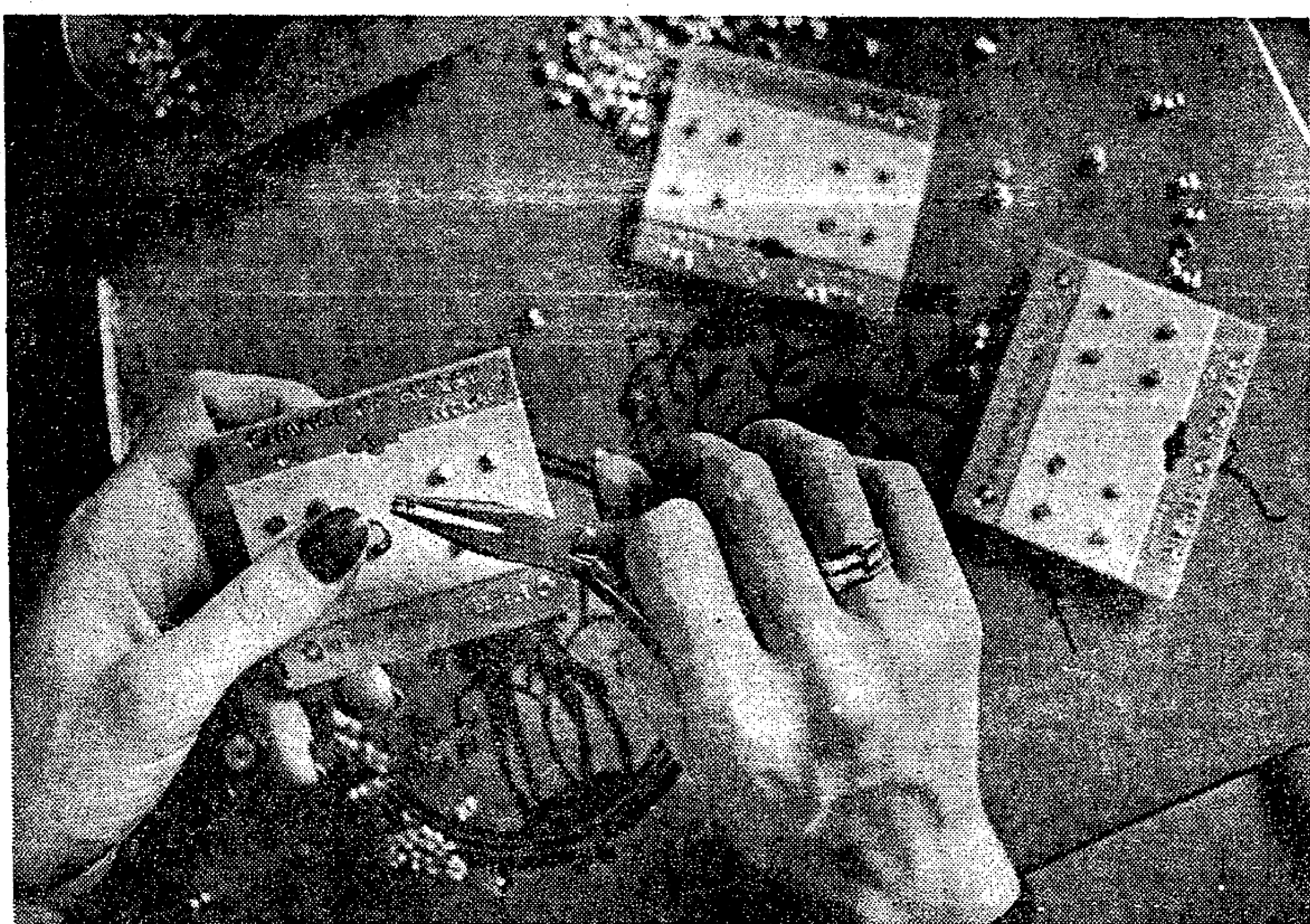
WASHINGTON — A nationwide strike of air-traffic controllers was canceled early yesterday when the government and union agreed on a tentative new contract less than three hours before the walkout was set to begin.

The controllers, who had been engaging in final strike votes in meeting halls across the country, were informed that the walkout was off and that they should report for their regular work shifts.

The Federal Aviation Administration, by which the 15,000 union and 2,000 nonunion controllers are employed, reported that operation of the regular daily schedule of 14,200 airline flights was close to normal. It had been anticipated that a strike, illegal under several federal laws, might ground half of the operations and cause damage to the overall economy of as much as $250 million a day.

At about 9:30 a.m., negotiators emerged from their all-night session to provide details of the tentative settlement. Robert Poli, president of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization, said he did not expect any trouble

Turn to CONTROLLERS, Page A-14



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

HOMEWORK: Outlawed more than 40 years ago, jewelry work such as this still goes on in thousands of Rhode Island homes daily.

Industry's hidden workshops

Illegal homework — outlawed in the 1930s — thrives in R.I.

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

Illegal home labor, with workers often toiling late into the night for wages as low as $1 an hour, is a thriving and integral part of the jewelry industry in Rhode Island.

It is factory work that has sneaked into tenements, two-deckers and suburban homes across the state. Rhode Island outlawed the practice more than 40 years ago because of wage violations, child labor, and other illegal and oppressive work conditions.

But all of those conditions prevail today.

* * *

EACH WEEK, uncounted thousands of Rhode Islanders convert their kitchens, living rooms or basements into hidden workshops for the state's jewelry factories.

They solder, glue, card, link, epoxy and paint jewelry with none of the worker protections state law demands inside the factories.

Frequently, the work goes through the night because of factory rush orders. Often, a network of neighbors and entire families is drawn into a single homework operation. And sometimes, state labor inspectors say, so are children.

Almost never does the money jewelry

Working in jewelry

Part three of six parts

factories and job shops pay for home labor meet or even approach minimum wage. In many cases the pay is barely over $1 an hour.

Still, jewelry homework is sought eagerly by people unable to leave their homes or find legal employment. And it is eagerly provided by an industry that has depended for generations on a steady supply of cheap, unskilled labor.

* * *

Her first name is Doris. She has 13 children, all grown now, and lives with her husband in a $100-a-month, second-floor tenement near McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket.

It is where she works for the jewelry industry.

"I always start at 8 in the morning," she says. "I take a break about 10. Lunch is a half-hour, no more.

"You know, I keep it like a factory. A regular day. Only I don't go in no factories. I work here."

The work is in the tenement's small living room, crowded with old, badly frayed furniture and littered with cardboard boxes of Avon jewelry. All day, Doris — surrounded by pictures of her children — sits at an imitation-wood coffee table in the center of the room, fashioning gold-plated earrings to plastic cards or linking necklace chain.

She says she's 54, but she is pale and bent over with age well beyond her years. Emphysema and "bad legs," she says, keep her from going up and down the tenement steps. But her thin hands move quickly.

This April day, the work is pushing earrings into cards, attaching clasps to the posts, tagging the card and sliding

Turn to HOMEWORK, Page A-4

Rep. Schneider praises jewelry-industry series

Rep. Claudine Schneider yesterday said she is "thrilled" that the *Journal-Bulletin* is running a "high quality" series outlining abuses in the state's jewelry industry. Mrs. Schneider said she had wondered about some of the problems herself when she visited factories on the campaign trail.

"I would often ask some of the employers various leading questions about the types of chemicals they were dealing with," Mrs. Schneider said.

What kind of responses did she get?

"They oftentimes had relatively good

Turn to REACTION, Page A-14

—UPI Photo

SAFE: Larry St. Peter hugs his wife, Liane, and son, Stefan, at his home in Edmonds, Wash. He was one of the climbers who survived an icefall on Mount Rainier. A snowstorm has delayed recovery of the 11 who died. Story on Page A-10.

EB files claim with Navy for rewelding sub

$18.9 million sought for fixing faulty work; Congress aides fearful of costly precedent

By JOHN F. FITZGERALD and DAN STETS
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writers

Electric Boat has filed the first of what congressional investigators predict may be "hundreds of millions of dollars" in insurance claims for faulty workmanship on up to 20 submarines built at the company's Groton shipyard.

EB submitted a claim for $18.9 million to cover the cost of repairing faulty welds its workers had made on the attack submarine Bremerton, and for delays and disruption associated with redoing the welds.

The long-awaited claim was dated June 16, and was hand delivered to the Navy's supervisor of shipbuilding in Groton early on the morning of June 17, while public attention was focused on the Ohio, the first Trident missile-firing submarine, which began sea trials that day — some 2½ years late.

The fate of the Bremerton claim is being watched closely by the Navy, Congress and the shipbuilding industry.

It is the first time since the Navy began insuring its builders, in 1942, that a company has claimed money to recover costs caused by its own faulty work and materials.

Since EB first declared its intent to file such claims, the Navy has stated it does not insure for faulty work, but other shipbuilders have told investigators of the House Appropriations Committee that they believe such claims are valid.

"If the shipbuilder's current interpretation holds," the investigators told the committee in February, "the investigative staff believes that insurance-clause claims for current Navy ship and submarine construction contracts could total to several hundreds of millions of dollars, and that claims will probably continue to be submitted for many years into the future."

The committee, which appropriates money for the Navy's ships, was sufficiently concerned that it put a clause in a recent 1981 supplemental appropriations bill that would have forbidden the Defense Department to spend any funds to pay such claims, but department lawyers

Turn to EB CLAIM, Page A-14

Nixon, top aides not safe from suits on rights breaches

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Former President Richard Nixon and his top assistants are not legally shielded from suits charging violations of constitutional rights, the Supreme Court said yesterday.

The high court, splitting 4-4, automatically upheld a federal appeals-court ruling that Nixon, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former Atty. Gen. John Mitchell and former Nixon aide H. R. Haldeman have only limited immunity from being sued personally for illegal wiretaps conducted while they were in power.

Supreme Court curtails Hare Krishna solicitations. Page A-6.

* * *

BUT THE JUSTICES kept afloat the question of the president's constitutional immunity from civil suits by agreeing to hear this fall another damage suit against Nixon, who resigned in 1974 because of the Watergate scandal.

When its new term opens, the court will consider arguments by Nixon's lawyers that he has blanket immunity from such actions. The case involves the dismissal of A. Ernest Fitzgerald, who alerted the public to cost overruns on the C5A aircraft and was fired.

Fitzgerald, who argues that his firing as a Defense Department employee was retaliation for his whistleblowing, seeks $3.5 million.

If the court finds in that case that the president is constitutionally protected from such civil suits, that would nullify yesterday's ruling.

* * *

THE CASE that split the court yesterday has to do with the 1969-71 bugging of the home telephone of former Nation-

Turn to NIXON, Page A-14

Chapman pleads guilty to murder of Lennon

The Washington Post

NEW YORK — In the belief that he was "doing God's work," Mark David Chapman yesterday switched his plea on a charge of murdering John Lennon from not guilty by reason of insanity, to guilty as charged.

CHAPMAN

The plea, entered against the advice of his lawyer, was announced by Judge Dennis Edwards in a crowded courtroom in the State Supreme Court in Manhattan. Chapman faces a term of 15 years to life when he is sentenced on Aug. 24.

"Mr. Chapman has exercised his constitutional right to amend the plea of not guilty, and to plead guilty to the charge of murder in the second degree," Edwards said.

There was no comment or statement from the 26-year-old Chapman. Pale and pudgy, the former mental patient sat quietly beside his lawyer, with two guards nearby. His court-appointed lawyer, Jonathan Marks, visibly upset, asked the court for a re-examination of the defendant to "determine whether he is competent to do what he did (yesterday)."

Marks said that in the past, it had been possible to have a good working relationship with his client, but since early this month, when Chapman believed he

Turn to CHAPMAN, Page A-14

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Homework: a matter of economics, a way of life

Working in jewelry

Homework

Continued from Page One

the finished product into a box. Uninterrupted, she does 216 cards an hour on this job. It pays her just over $2. "I make good at this," she says.

Sometimes, she says, when there is a rush order and late night work, her unemployed husband and three of her daughters "help out." But today, and most days, it is her alone at the coffee table for 8, 10 or 12 hours.

★ ★ ★

"WHAT THEY PAY, it isn't fair. But people need the work. I need the work. So you take what you get," says Mary, a Mount Pleasant High School student whose homework for a Providence manufacturer has paid her as little as $1.50 an hour.

Adds Lottie Riccitelli, a Providence women who did homework for 10 years after her husband died leaving her with three children to support: "It was the only work I could get. I couldn't leave my children. I had to work at home."

Often, the pay Mrs. Riccitelli got for the work fell far below minimum wage, her homework records show. Often, her small ranch house was filled with the pungent odor of the epoxy and resin she used to paint jewelry late at night in her kitchen.

Still, she says, "I had no choice. It was work and I needed work."

She allows her name to be used because she stopped doing homework in April and because the shop she worked for in the old Wanskuck Mill on Branch Avenue deducted taxes and Social Security from her meager earnings. She does not worry about unpaid taxes and no longer fears a knock on the door by labor officials.

But active homeworkers, still dependent on the money they make at home, do.

They are women, mostly. Young mothers, as was Mrs. Riccitelli, with small children to care for at home; high school girls unable to find part-time work; workers disabled by illnesses and unable to go into the factories any more; immigrants whose brothers, sisters or aunts work in the shop; and the elderly.

★ ★ ★

It is Saturday afternoon, a sunny spring day. But the shades are drawn in all three rooms of the tiny apartment on the second floor of the two-family home off Atwells Avenue in Providence.

The glare from the sun, the young mother explains, makes it hard to work. She is 26, thin, attractive and the mother of 19-month-old twins.

Her work is at the metal kitchen table, assembling and carding tiny earrings painted with various colors of epoxy. The twins, in matching metal high chairs, are on either side of her playing with their lunch — peanut butter on Sunbeam bread.

The jewelry order was dropped off Friday night, the young mother says. It has to be back by Monday morning. The last time that happened, she had to work until 4 Sunday morning, 5 Monday morning and all day and into the early morning hours Tuesday. Her husband and a sister helped out. The pay was $56.

"I never thought I'd get done. That was a terrible job. A horrible job. But this is better," she says. "It's not a big job. I'll do most of it tonight. Tomorrow I'll finish."

In all, there are 336 pink cards to be filled. The job, she explains, is to assemble five pairs of different-colored earrings, push them into the cards in a preset pattern, attach the earring clutch, and package the product neatly in a cardboard box on the floor. The cards are mounded on the table. The earring parts, sorted by color and style, are in a muffin pan. That is her system, she explains. Each completed card pays 4½ cents and it helps, she says, to have a system.

"He (factory owner) told me I should make $2.65 (per hour) on this job. He said that was minimum wage, but I know it isn't," she laughs. (Minimum is $3.35). "It doesn't matter anyway. I'm not Speedy Gonzalez. But nobody can make $2.65 on this job."

Because of interruptions caring for the twins, getting dinner for her husband and answering the phone and things, she says, she has no idea exactly what the job pays hourly. She thinks it is about $2 an hour. But she agrees to let a reporter time her work.

The timing includes carding and boxing, but not setting up the operation. Her times begin at 2 minutes, 12 seconds; 2:32; 2:21: 2:10; 2:14; 2:13; 2:14. Over a half-hour, the work averages 2:13 a card. At 4½ cents a card, without breaks and discounting setup time, the pay is $1.11 an hour.

"That isn't very good, is it?" she asks, surprised. "But I'm sure I'll get faster. I'm sure I'll make more."

THERE HAS been no indication of a homework problem in the jewelry industry for years, maintained George R. Frankovich, executive director of the Manufacturing Jewelers & Silversmiths of America, the industry association.

"It's virtually non-existent," Frankovich said.

His appraisal was supported by John T. McMahon, area director of the U.S. Labor Department's employment standards division, who said he has received few wage complaints from workers in the jewelry industry and none from homeworkers.

"You normally find homework in industries where there is piecework. And there isn't much piecework in jewelry as I understand it," he said.

In fact, piecework is a mainstay of jewelry assembly operations in Rhode Island. And homework along with it.

State labor officials — in marked contrast to their federal counterparts — have long held that jewelry homework is an overriding labor abuse in Rhode Island.

They have no firm statistics.

But they have grim examples:

- In an apartment on Broad Street in South Providence an entire family of Southeast Asian refugees — including a grandmother and a child — is found carding and linking jewelry. The work is being done late into the night at rates far below those set for minimum-wage factory labor. Yet, stunned labor inspectors learn, the family carded and linked more than $30,000 in jewelry last year.
- A purported job shop in the Mapleville section of Burrillville is found to be a homework network being run out of a trailer and using women and children in the trailer park as part-time "employees."
- A man and his wife in West Warwick run a homework operation out of their suburban house using 14 neighborhood children ranging in age from 10 to 15. The homework operator, labor officials say, had secured federal tax forms for three of his own underage children as independent contractors.
- A factory manager in Providence is found assigning homework to the firm's regular employees, thus avoiding overtime. The factory books are doctored with the names of phony employees in an attempt to cover up the operation.

★ ★ ★

ALL ARE recent cases recounted by state labor inspectors assigned to police the jewelry industry over the last 18 months. The operations were closed down by labor officials and back wages paid to cheated employees.

But there was not a single prosecution. Pressed by the crush of investigations and limited in their power to gain access to homes, labor officials say they find it more effective to seek "compliance" with the law rather than to initiate court action.

Because of that, labor officials refuse to release the names of the firms and people involved.

But they readily concede that home labor operations in jewelry have been pervasive, deeply rooted and rampant with wage and child-labor violations for generations.

★ ★ ★

"I HAVE WALKED into homes of people I know, and their kid is sitting there doing jewelry work," says Jacqueline Cugini, a state labor inspector assigned to the jewelry industry.

"I say, 'What are you doing? What are you doing? Stop it.'

"It aggravates me. It enrages me because they're people you know. And there they are, doing jewelry work in their homes. It just can't be regulated," she says.

Roberta Orticerio, administrator of the state Division of Labor Standards, agrees.

"The problem in jewelry work is that it is unskilled work that gets into the home so easily," says Mrs. Orticerio. "And if they're pressed and have to get an order out, you find the kids end up there with them working to get it done. We've found cases where they can't go out to play because they have to help with the work. Cases where they're kept home from school."

In one case three years ago, she says, there was a "strong suspicion" that a child was beaten because he dropped a tray of jewelry in a homework situation. But labor investigators could neither prove the case nor shut down the homework operation because the complaints were based on confidential information and the owner of the house refused to allow them in without a search warrant.

"We didn't have enough probable cause to go to court. So we warned the individual. But do I believe there was child labor and at least one incident of abuse? Yes," she says.

★ ★ ★

THE ABUSES go beyond occasional child labor cases found in home labor operations. In virtually every case investigated by labor officials, Mrs. Orticerio says, minimum wage and overtime violations are found. It is not uncommon, she adds, for homeworkers to labor until 2, 3 or 4 in the morning to meet rush orders from the factories, then have no work for days.

Health and safety violations also worry state labor officials. Soldering shops, they say, have been found in basements of tenements and single-family houses using jury-rigged propane tanks to power the soldering guns.

"It's an evil thing for the state," Mrs. Orticerio concludes. "It depresses wages in what is already one of the lowest paying production workers' jobs in the country. It robs the state of taxes. It takes advantage of people — the home worker and her sister in the factory as well."

"It's a bad, bad thing. And it's been part of the jewelry industry as far back as I can remember," she says.

★ ★ ★

"I've done homework all my life," the old woman smiles. "I think it."

She is in her early 60s, but — like Doris — aged beyond her years. During the day, she works stringing and soldering jewelry for a Providence job shop at minimum wage. But nights, like this night, she sits in the kitchen of a second-floor two-decker she shares with a son in Cranston, carding the same earrings Doris cards in Pawtucket for the same Olneyville job shop.

She begins after supper and the nightly television news. A metal table in the kitchen is her workbench. Most nights, she figures, she makes a little over a dollar an hour.

"It's something extra. Something to pay my Blue Cross. You don't mind making a dollar, dollar-fifty an hour. It's your home and it's extra," she says.

"Everybody needs extra today."

★ ★ ★

THOUGH THERE are no official estimates on the number of homeworkers, the state Labor Department's most recent attempt to eliminate homework provides a measure of its size.

In 1979, Mrs. Orticerio's Division of Labor Standards surveyed the jewelry industry and identified 800 manufacturers farming out $50 million in work — generally piecework — to 1,800 small jewelry job shops.

In November of that year, the division required all job shops to register under a new state law that gave the Labor Department authority to license such operations. The law, Mrs. Orticerio says, was drafted specifically to fight jewelry homework.

Only 1,200 jewelry job shops registered.

Mrs. Orticerio says some of the 600 shops that failed to register simply went out of business. But many, she theorizes, were not shops at all, but fronts for homework operations.

"We sent someone around to all the shops that didn't register and, in many cases, the shops simply couldn't be found. It leads us to believe they were homeworkers," she says.

Meanwhile, inspectors from her division pulled spot checks last year on nearly half the 1,200 shops that did register. The inspections were part of the division's latest attempt to eliminate homework in jewelry.

At least 60 of the shops were found to be operating out of homes and were ordered to close down.

Because of the crush of inspections, labor officials say, they did not charge any of the homework operators or offending manufacturers. But in future years, Mrs. Orticerio says, they will push for court cases.

"Our policy, whether industrial homework or minimum wage violations, has always been you gain compliance. But we may get into prosecutions," she says.

Last year's inspections, she says, were the first time job shops have been closely looked at in the state. "I think we're getting a handle on it," she says.

★ ★ ★

BUT THE HANDLE, despite a major effort over the last year by state inspectors, is thin at best.

A *Journal-Bulletin* investigation of working conditions in the jewelry industry — an investigation that overlapped the state's crackdown on homework — indicates that the number of jewelry homeworkers remains well in the thousands despite the increased inspections.

The state's inspection program is designed to

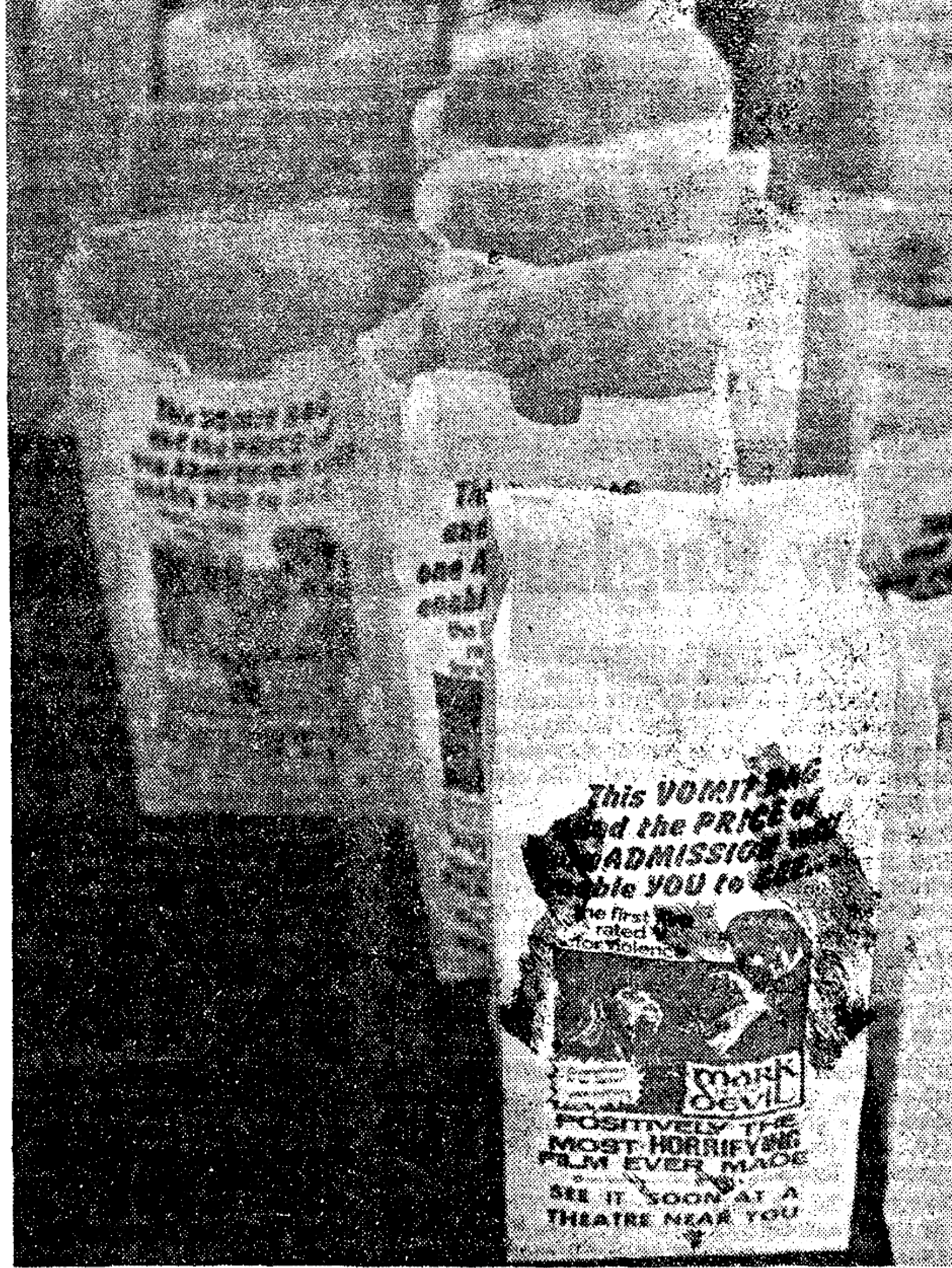
Continued on Next Page

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

Worker at a jewelry shop that uses homeworkers weighs pieces of jewelry and puts them into bags.

'It was the only work I could get. I couldn't leave my children. I had to work at home.'

—Lottie Riccitelli



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

BAGS: One firm uses these bags to give jewelry pieces to homeworkers.

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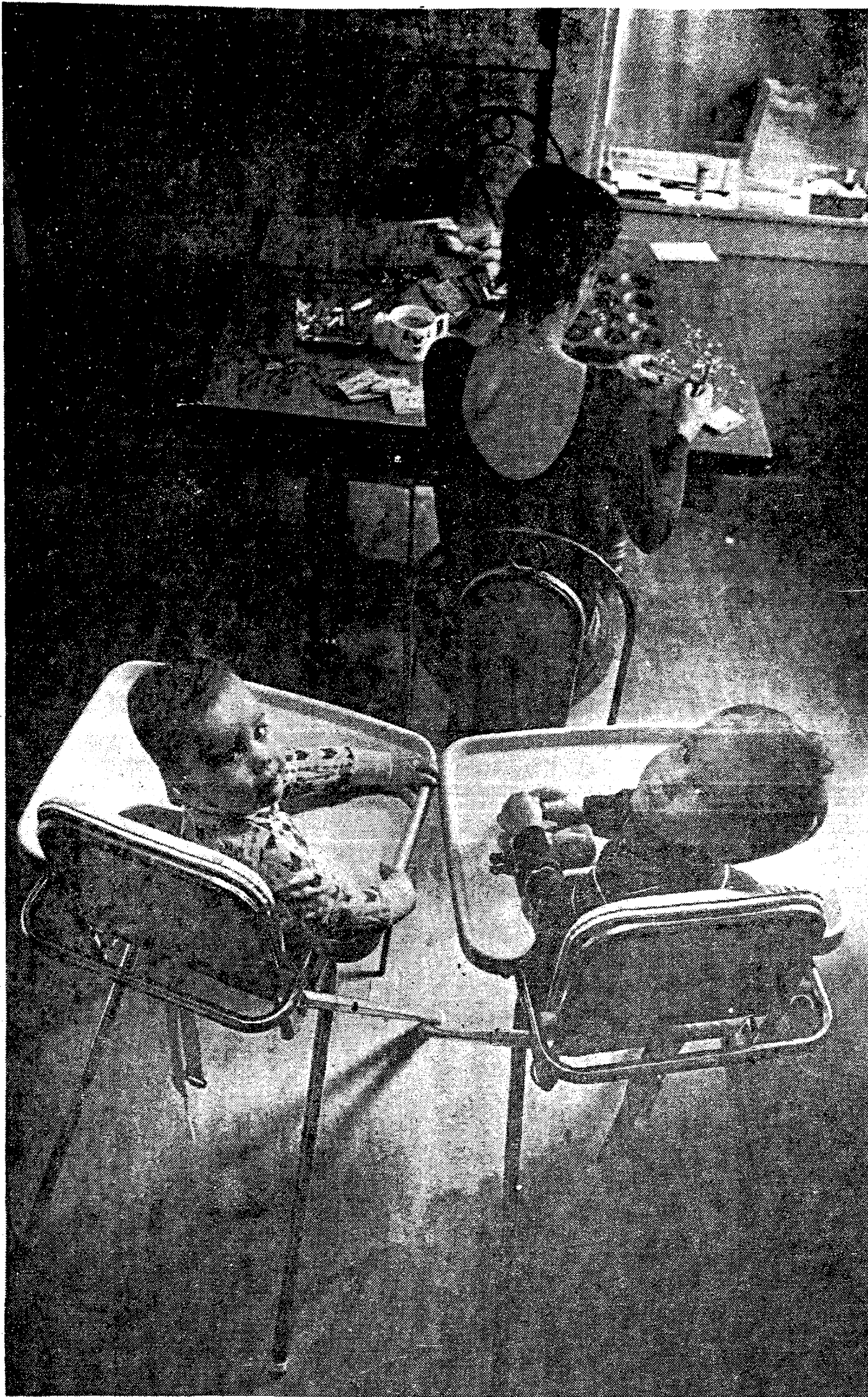

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

HOMEWORK: A young Providence mother assembles jewelry in her kitchen flanked by her 19-month-old twins.

Continued from Previous Page

catch only the most blatant operations. The bulk of home labor continues to flow unimpeded.

In a few cases, the *Journal-Bulletin* found, home labor is being directly supplied by manufacturers.

But the extent of home labor operations in Rhode Island reveals itself largely through the network of hundreds of small jewelry job shops that exist on low-paying contract work sent to them by the manufacturers.

★ ★ ★

The work that Doris does in the Pawtucket tenement is delivered by a son-in-law to a job shop in Olneyville Square.

The factory entrance is down a pitch-dark hallway in the back of a mill complex. A reporter has to prop the outer door open to let enough light in to find the inner door.

A stocky woman speaking Portuguese shows him how to do it. She has two young children in tow and is bringing cartons of carded jewelry back to the shop. For each carton she brings in, she brings another of loose jewelry out. The children help her load it into the car.

Inside, the shop is large and airy. It is also empty of workers.

Yes, the owner of the firm concedes during a lengthy interview, the Portuguese woman is a homeworker. So is Doris. So is most of the help.

"I held out as long as I could. I didn't want to use homeworkers. But you can't survive without them," he says.

He is a congenial man, in his late 30s. His business is carding, stringing, wrapping and assembling jewelry for jewelry manufacturers. He is not making a lot of money, he says. Like Doris and the Portuguese woman, he says, he is just surviving.

He has eight steady homeworkers. The eight are carried on his books as regular employees. He deducts for their taxes, pays Social Security and workers' compensation on them.

"At least I'm not cheating IRS," he says.

Like Doris, he says, most of the eight give out the homework to relatives and neighbors. "But I don't get involved in that. I deal with my eight. What they do with the work is their business," he says.

"I'd say, conservatively, two-thirds of the jobbers hand the work out. Not the platers, but the others. It goes out to homeworkers because you can't afford to have it done with shop labor," he says.

"I try to be fair," he says. "I give good rates, and I think my girls appreciate that."

A fast girl, he adds, can make $2 or more an hour.

★ ★ ★

THE TENACITY of home labor in the industry is not easily overcome.

One homework operation uncovered by investigators and ordered shut down, for example, was found six months later by the *Journal-Bulletin* to be operating out of a licensed job shop off Manton Avenue in Providence.

The shop, two small rooms in back of a ground-floor tenement, was equipped with three foot-presses and several workbenches. The owner, an affable man who had spent his life as a jewelry worker, conceded that the shop — empty most of the time — was designed as a front for a homework operation involving 26 women in three cities.

"They need the money. I need the money. I don't see who it's hurting," the man said.

Another homework operation involving thousands of dollars in work and many workers was shut down by state investigators in Providence. Later it was relicensed out of a small, single room shop on Broad Street.

Labor officials conceded the licensing was questionable, and suspected the work was still being done in homes.

The *Journal-Bulletin* visited the shop six times, three in the day and three at night. Always, it was locked. "He isn't there much," a neighboring shop owner said.

★ ★ ★

SHOP OWNERS and manufacturers interviewed say that home labor is a matter of economics.

Jewelry work in Rhode Island depends heavily on cheap, unskilled labor to assemble its products. The industry is founded on a network of small job shops that provide that labor.

The job shops, often in fierce competition for orders, turn to home labor to remain competitive.

In good times — like the 1960s in costume jewelry — the contract shops turn to home workers to handle excesses they cannot handle themselves. In bad times — like now — home workers provide the competitive edge needed to grab shrinking numbers of contracts.

Manufacturers "have you in a bind," said one Providence jobber. "When you complain and try to get a working price, they say: 'OK, we'll give it to somebody else.' And you know, especially when times are bad, the jobbers are lining up to take the work just to keep the doors open. So you take the work and give it out."

"It's the only way you can survive." This jobber specializes in carding and stringing jewelry. Because he uses homeworkers, he asks that he not be identified.

Interviews with jobbers and manufacturers across the state show that his philosophy is widely held.

Jewelry firm owners who concede using homeworkers, and homeworkers themselves, tell only part of the story.

"We're competing against homeworkers. And anybody that thinks they aren't all over this business doesn't know what they're talking about," declares Frances Gilchrist, owner of S and G Jobbers on Chalkstone Avenue.

Her shop (which later went out of business) was a small rented room where four employees worked soldering jewelry rings and brooches. She paid minimum wage, she says, and worked 12 and 14 hours a day herself and still could not survive despite plenty of orders.

The reason: Prices for soldering jewelry were too low: Two cents a solder point.

"Who can afford to do work as cheap as that and be legitimate? Nobody. It's that low because people are working out of their cellars," she says.

Perry Borrelli, former owner of House of Borrelli in Providence, provides a manufacturer's point of view: "I call jewelry a roller-coaster ride. You're up one minute, down the next.

"If everybody did everything they were supposed to do, it would be very difficult for most firms to survive," he says.

Borrelli, whose small firm was one of the more marginally run jewelry manufacturing companies in the state before it went out of business in February, insists he did not use homeworkers himself. But the practice, he agreed, is widespread and has been since he began in jewelry work more than 25 years ago.

"I have a friend, this is just one case, a very good friend. He runs (names company), but please don't use his name. All he does is send the work out to jobbers. And he pays, puff. He pays nothing to the jobbers because he knows they use homeworkers. So (my friend) is not sending the work out to homeworkers. But he's sending it out to jobbers who send it out to homeworkers and he knows it. But because he's not dealing with the homeworkers, his hands are clean, see. That's the way it works in this business," says Borrelli.

Borrelli's view is not that of just one manufacturer. Several major manufacturers in Rhode Island admitted — on the stipulation that their names not be used — that they knowingly send their work out to jobbers who in turn farm it out to homeworkers.

"As far as I'm concerned, I'm dealing with licensed shops," one Smithfield manufacturer said. "But I know the shops. I know they use homeworkers. As long as they don't knock me off (by copying jewelry design) and as long as they do quality work, I don't care. It's good for me and it's good for them," the manufacturer said.

★ ★ ★

ROLAND MORIN provides still another view. He and his wife, Janet, have done homework, he has run a homework network of more than 20 workers under a phony job shop, and he has been supervisor of job shop work in a Providence jewelry shop.

He and his wife no longer do homework. But, he insists, it is an essential part of the state's costume jewelry industry.

"A jobber today can't survive on in-house (workers), because a manufacturer can just about survive," Morin says. "So the manufacturer cuts the jobber down and the jobber goes to homeworkers."

"Really, I don't see anything wrong with it. I mean, there should be a way to protect people who work in their home. I know how bad it can be. Me and my wife did jobs for pennies. That isn't right. But homework can be a good thing for people, if the people aren't taken advantage of," he says.

★ ★ ★

"A story like this, like you're doing, will put the pressure on the jobbers," the owner of the Olneyville job shop says. "And that isn't right because it's the manufacturers who create the situation."

"To me, the manufacturers are a bunch of hypocrites," he adds.

"They say, 'Now, you can't let any of this out to homeworkers.' But they know that's what you're doing. They know it because they shoot you a price on a job that means you'd have to be in the shop around the clock paying less than minimum wage to get the work out," he says.

"Right now," he says, "I've got an Avon job for carding that's seven steps. That's a movement for each step. Time for each step. The manufacturer, because (the job is for) Avon and they're particular, warns me not to give it to homeworkers.

"But the price is three cents a card. A good worker, working steady, can do 100 an hour. That's $3. So, of course, I got to give it out. I give it out at a penny and a half a card. Most jobbers would give it out at a penny. Two-thirds for the shop, a third for the homeworker. That's the system. But I split.

Even with the split, my homeworkers can't do more than $1.50 on that job. But what choice do I have? I can shut the doors, or I can give it out." he says.

"So I said, sure, I'll take the job. And then this manufacturer, he made a big point of checking my shop license and warning me again not to give it out 'cause it was Avon.

"What a hypocrite," he says.

'We've found cases where (children) can't go out to play because they have to help with the work. Cases where they're kept home from school.'

—Roberta Orticerio

'Homework isn't fair,' says student who did it

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

Mary is a student at Mount Pleasant High School. In September of 1979, when she was 16, she started doing homework for a Providence jewelry manufacturer near her house. She continued to link, card and "clean chain" for the factory at home until last fall. Now she works part-time inside the factory. Here she talks about her experience doing illegal homework.

There's plenty of people who will do homework. They can't find jobs. That's why I did it. I couldn't get a job and a friend, his family owns the factory, he got me the homework job.

I did it weekends at first. Then I started doing it nights too. It came directly from them to me. Then I brought it back to them.

You have to call them every day and they give you a deadline. They don't care if you have to stay up all night to do it. They have a deadline and you have a deadline.

They used to do a lot of (work for) Avon, basically carding pierced earrings. But I also did clean chain. That can be hard. You have to use pliers to clean the cut chain off the ends.

Ninety percent, though, is carding. There can be one pair on the cards. There can be six pairs on a card. You have to push them in the cards, put the clutch on the post and box it.

The clutches are so tight that your fingers bleed. Like, my fingers bled on the first six jobs I did. The clutches are so tight the first time they go on, it's really hard. Until your fingers get tough enough, you bleed.

My fingers are tough now. It doesn't bother me any more.

What is the pay?

They pay you by piece. They pay you two-thirds of a cent per pair of earrings you put on cards. I started on that and I finished on that.

The homeworkers never get a raise. You never get a raise.

That's the way the business has been run from time eternal. Like, a jewelry company isn't gonna pay anybody any money because then they'll all have to do it. There's too many people against it.

I think the first job I made $1.20 an hour. The amount they give you varies. Some nights I'd pick up a job on a Friday night. Say 3,600 cards. Now that's a lot of cards when you put two (pairs of) earrings on a card.

I'd work Friday night, all day Saturday, and late into Sunday night to get them all done.

Good jobs carding are two (dollars) or two fifty. But you don't get the best jobs often. Like putting loops in chain earrings take much longer. But the piece rate is the same. You have to take the good with the bad.

Cleaning chain, I think the rate is five chains for a penny. But that isn't that hard. It just takes a lot of work to make money. You'd be lucky to make a buck and a half an hour on that job.

The rate's normally around $1.50 an hour. When I figured it out, that was about average.

If they pay people in the shop to do the work, it would cost a lot more. So they give it out. It's the cheapest way to get the work done. The fastest way to do it.

If it's the only work you get, you take it.

Now, I'm inside. They gave me a part-time job inside and the pay's better. It pays minimum wage. But the work is tough. I've done three different things. I've done soldering, now I'm doing casting, I've done carding and painting.

Like, what I'm doing now, I stand up the entire time. I go in there for three hours and 45 minutes a day.

It's in a room and you have metal that's melted down. I think it's twelve hundred degees.

There's people who've been working in there 25 years and they're still making less than $4 an hour.

And they deserve more 'cause they're such nice people that work in there. And they just can't do anything else. They either don't have a high school diploma or they just have a high school diploma and there aren't many jobs in our society today for these people. And they're over 40.

They deserve more.

What do you think of your work?

There are a lot of things wrong with it. But, like I say, it's the way it's been done for so long they've just fallen into a pattern. 'Cause it isn't that they're unfair people. Because they're not.

I think they're nice people. They are nice people. I don't think they mean to not give us a fair shake. I mean, I know they know what they're doing. They're paying the girls that work in there all week long 100 bucks and they're taking home $900 a week themselves. But I think, you know, if somebody made them pay more they would.

They just haven't thought about it.

If they were told they had to give us a raise, they would. But nobody sits down and makes any rules. So they just go along. Because their father ran it that way before them.

Now, they have a bunch of school girls in the shop. There's about 30 girls from St. Mary's working in the shop. And kids from Central.

But I think they have a lot of homework because the work we handle couldn't be put out by just 30 girls. No way could they do all that work.

There's girls that do the homework. There's a lot of elderly people that do the homework, but I don't know them.

I just know from what I hear in the shop that the homeworkers — a lot of them — are old people now.

But I can tell you, whether they are old people or not, homework isn't fair.

Working in jewelry

What's ahead

The series will continue through Friday in the *Journal* and *Evening Bulletin*.

Wednesday: How the jewelry industry affects the health of its workers; and a look at the hazardous chemicals used in the manufacturing process.

Thursday: What federal and state inspectors do — or don't do — to clean up the major problems in the industry.

Friday: Conclusion: can, and should, the jewelry industry be cleaned up?

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Reaction

Continued from Page One

answers or else they were so embarrassed they would be inclined to say, 'It's only a temporary problem.' "

Mrs. Schneider said she found it "incredible" that the state Health Department's occupational safety division had made only 100 inspections at jewelry plants over the last seven years.

★ ★ ★

SEN. CLAIBORNE PELL said, "The jewelry industry is our largest industrial employer and it has certain unique characteristics. It's extremely fragmented and very competitive, factors which lend themselves to the abuses detailed in the (*Sunday Journal*) article."

Pell said the Manufacturing Jewelers & Silversmiths of America, the industry organization, deserves praise for taking steps — the planned Fields Point water pollution control facility, for example — to reduce the industry's detrimental effects on the environment.

Mrs. Schneider said the Fields Point facility "will help a great deal."

Regarding actual violations of law, Pell said that he hoped officials in the state Health Department and the regional Occupational Safety and Health Administration office would read the series and investigate the allegations. He remarked that even though there are probably "not enough men" in OSHA's regional office to regulate so large an industry, eight OSHA inspections of jewelry plants in a year "struck me as a rather small number."

However, Pell said, the state should be careful not to bear down so hard that we "throw out the baby with the bathwater." Jewelry, he remarked, is the state's largest industry, followed by the textile industry.

"We don't have a base of nice, high-wage industries," remarked Pell.

Sen. John H. Chafee and Rep. Fernand J. St Germain could not be reached for comments.

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The Providence Journal

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CITY EDITION

City

MAYOR CIANCI'S failure to submit a layoff plan to reduce city spending by $2 million appears to have further hurt his chances of winning City Council approval for a $3.40 tax hike. Page B-1.

State

A U.S. DISTRICT Court jury in Boston retires for the night without reaching a verdict in the second extortion trial of former Rhode Island House Speaker Edward P. Manning. Page A-3.

GOVERNOR GARRAHY plans to ask the state Supreme Court to advise on the constitutionality of a state law requiring United Nuclear Corp. to post a bond covering cleanup of its plant. Page A-3.

A 15-YEAR-OLD confessed prostitute, who wants to take custody of the baby who was born to her two weeks ago, is arrested after allegedly attempting to flag down motorists for prostitution. Page A-3.

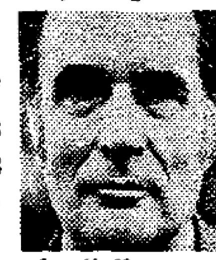
National

STEVEN STAYNER, right, describes how he turned young Timmy White over to authorities after the boy allegedly had been abducted by Kenneth Parnell. Page A-5.

SEN. JOHN H. CHAFEE sees two of his tax proposals — one a boost for pension savings, the other a break for Americans working abroad — clear the Finance Committee compromised but unopposed. Page A-2.

FLAMES SET by an arsonist roar out of California's Napa Valley wine country for a second day. Page A-6.

International



PRESIDENT Francois Mitterrand of France names four Communists to his Cabinet, the first time Communists have been in a major Western government since 1947. Page A-6.

IRAQI PRESIDENT Saddam Hussein asks "all peace-loving nations" to help Arabs acquire the atom bomb to balance Israel's nuclear capabilities. Page A-6.

Financial

ALICE JEWELRY CORP. is to be liquidated. Jewelry industry sources say its principals now are identified with a new jewelry-making operation. Page C-1.

THE STOCK MARKET rallies, encouraged by sharp declines in short-term interest rates and a mild inflation rate. The Dow average rises 12.46. Page C-1.

Food

BERRIES and peaches and pears, oh my! Summertime fruit-salad suppers, particularly appealing on hot sticky days, can be a delight to the palate as well as to the eye. So, lend an artistic touch to dinner. Page F-1.

Sports

TOLMAN HIGH SCHOOL completes an undefeated season and captures the Suburban baseball championship with an 11-7 victory over Smithfield. Page B-12.

KATHY RINALDI, a 14-year-old American, becomes the youngest player ever to win a match at the Wimbledon tennis tournament. Page B-11.

TWO FORMER CHAMPIONS, Julie Greene and Nancy Chaffee, along with the medalist, Laura Carson, advance in the RIWGA tournament. Page B-11.

Weather

SUNNY TODAY. High in the upper 70s. Increasing cloudiness tonight. Low in the upper 50s. A chance of showers tomorrow. High about 80. Page A-2.

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Providence layoff plan runs into difficulties

By BOB WYSS
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Laying off city workers may be more difficult than the city thought and the projected saving of $2 million a year may be as little as $500,000, a spokesman for the Cianci administration said yesterday.

Councilman Charles R. Mansolillo said directors of three major city departments raised many objections to a proposed new list of 122 employees to be laid off. Those complaints have forced the administration to reconsider the list, and it may have to be reduced by half, Mansolillo said.

Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. had set the $2-million savings goal in the budget, calling for a $3.40 tax increase, that he submitted last month to the City Council.

The administration had hoped to complete the layoff list yesterday but Mansolillo conceded that it would not be ready until the end of the week.

"It appears there may be substantial difficulty in carrying out the layoffs and still providing adequate city services," Mansolillo said. "The mayor has been advised of this and we are taking another look at the layoff list to see if there is another way we can carry them out."

* * *

MANSOLILLO SAW two possibilities: The city may be able to lay off only half as many workers as it planned, or it may be possible to spread the layoffs beyond the three departments where they are now concentrated and achieve the original layoff goal.

While the money to be saved from layoffs could be drastically less than expected, Mansolillo said, Finance Director Jerome I. Baron has come up with an unexpected saving of $720,000 in another area. That saving would occur if the city does not fill positions that became vacant after retirements and resignations.

Fewer layoffs could pose major problems for the City Council Finance Committee, which is attempting to eliminate the $3.40 tax hike projected in Cianci's budget.

Some finance experts have said that because Cianci never specified how the layoffs would be accomplished, his estimated tax increase should have been $2 higher. If Cianci does not save $2 million by laying off city workers, the committee will be forced to do more budget-cutting.

Mansolillo made his observations after

Turn to LAYOFFS, Page A-16

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

CHEERS: A Pawtucket Red Sox fan gives the home team a cheer.

PawSox win in 33rd

By ANGELO CATALDI
Journal-Bulletin Sports Writer

PAWTUCKET — Bob Ojeda looked to his left and saw a water pipe spewing forth a steady stream of water from the ceiling, he looked to the right and saw an army of clutching, clawing reporters, and he looked straight ahead into the lenses of a half-dozen television cameras drawing precariously close to his nose.

"This is terrific," declared the winning pitcher of the longest game in professional baseball history. "I feel like I'm at the Mardi Gras."

And so it was that the Pawtucket Red Sox defeated the Rochester Red Wings, 3-2, last night in 33 innings, as both teams kept their date with baseball history before 5,756 witnesses at chaotic, ceremonious McCoy Stadium.

The windup of the historic game was a prelude to the teams' regularly scheduled game. History didn't repeat in that game. Rochester won, 7-6, in "only" nine innings.

In stark contrast to the plodding, stalemated first 32 innings — contested over a stretch of 8 hours and 7 minutes on the night of April 18 and the morning of April 19 — the final inning of the suspended game was crisply played and quite decisive.

After Ojeda had stopped Rochester with little difficulty in the top of the 33rd inning, Pawtucket struck quickly. Marty Barrett was hit on the left shoulder by the first pitch from Red Wing pitcher Steve Grilli. The next batter, Chico Walker, sent a deftly placed hit-and-run single up the middle that allowed Barrett to jog to third, and Russ Laribee drew an intentional walk, loading the bases with no outs.

Rochester manager Doc Edwards summoned Cliff Speck, the ace of his bullpen, but it was far too late by then. Dave Koza stayed with a curve ball on the outside part of the plate and spilled a soft, lazy fly ball to short left field, beyond the reach of the drawn-in infield, and in front of the charging outfielders — as Barrett trotted home with the winning run.

The Pawtucket dugout exploded into a frenzy of excitement, surrounding Koza and the other players responsible for the victory and marching off in the exuberant manner of a team that had just won the seventh game of the World Series.

"This is history," bellowed Koza a short time later.

Turn to PAWSOX, Page A-16

High inflation is 'behind us,' official says

The optimistic outlook stems from annual inflation rate under 10% for 3rd straight month

United Press International

WASHINGTON — The government said yesterday that the annual inflation rate stayed under 10 percent for the third straight month, prompting the administration to hail May's Consumer Price Index as a watershed that put high inflation "behind us."

The index rose at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 8.4 percent in May, up 0.7 percent for the month.

* * *

THE MAY FIGURE MEANS that the cost of living held below double numbers for three consecutive months for the first time since the spring of 1978. March consumer prices climbed 7.5 percent and April's, 5.1 percent, projected annually.

"Double-digit inflation as a phenomenon is behind us," Murray Weidenbaum, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, proclaimed.

Asked what the figures meant for the future, he replied, "I think the trend is quite clear. It's down — a slowdown in inflation."

He cautioned, however, that in some months inflation could still climb above 10 percent.

The cost of gasoline, oil and most food, only recently the major bad news for shoppers, dropped in May. Taking their place on the escalator were the increasing costs of financing and purchasing a home, together four-fifths of May's increase.

The inclusion of such costs in the monthly index has received wide criticism, since home owners can take decades to pay off a mortgage.

* * *

THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX for the month reached 269, which means it took $269 in 1981 dollars to buy the amount of retail goods that $100 could have purchased 14 years ago.

But the Labor Department, in a separate report, found that the paychecks of Americans were not growing as rapidly as the cost of living, and fell behind price hikes for the sixth consecutive month.

The average gross weekly paycheck reached $252.03 in May, a slight increase over April. But after adjustments for inflation and seasonal factors, real earnings showed a 0.4 percent decrease, as did the category designated "real spendable earnings." Over the past year, American workers have lost 2 percent in spendable earnings.

In May, the average cost of a gallon of gasoline fell another 1.1 cents, to $1.37, according to the Labor Department. Current data show that prices have continued to fall in June, despite a sharp pickup in the amount of driving.

The broad category of food and beverage prices went down 0.2 percent in May, the first drop since February, 1980. The narrower category of grocery prices fell even more, by 0.5 percent.

N.H. state workers on three-day sickout

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. — More than 80 percent of New Hampshire's 9,200 state workers, disgruntled over a proposed pay raise they consider inadequate, stayed off the job yesterday in the start of a three-day sickout that severely curtailed state services.

Fifty of the state's 69 liquor stores were closed, the state lottery was suspended, the monthly mailing of food stamps may be delayed, employment and vehicle-registration offices closed, and supervisory and part-time employees were operating highway and bridge toll booths.

The Public Employees Labor Relations Board ordered the state workers back to their jobs. The board unanimously passed an order that said state workers should return to their jobs immediately.

There was no immediate response from leaders of the state workers.

* * *

GOV. HUGH GALLEN called out about 200 National Guardsmen to pro-

Turn to N.H. SICKOUT, Page A-16

Many workers robbed of health in jobs called safe by industry

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

John Iacoucci is 57, jobless and slowly losing his ability to breathe. Twenty-five years as a caster in the state's jewelry industry have left him with a disease that is killing his lungs.

Eventually, his doctor says, the disease may slowly choke him to death — if he does not die first of the lung cancer he is now 20 times more likely to get because of his occupation.

Governor Garrahy to respond to the reports. Page A-16.

"I don't relish the thought of an early death," Iacoucci says. "But, what the hell. I can't blame anybody for it. Whoever thought — I never even considered that what I did would be injurious. That it could do this to me," he says.

Iacoucci has talcosis, a disease that is progressively hardening his lungs. He got it from years of breathing industrial talc used to powder rubber molds in the jewelry casting process — talc often contaminated with traces of asbestos and silica.

Working in jewelry

Part four of six parts

It is a job that even today the jewelry industry insists is perfectly safe.

But Iacoucci's jewelry job has robbed him of his health, and likely will take his life. And in that, he is not alone.

* * *

EVIDENCE GATHERED by the *Journal-Bulletin* indicates that thousands of Rhode Island jewelry workers have been forced out of the industry because the work makes them sick, or struggle along in poor health in those jobs because they have no other place to go.

Some, like Iacoucci, have diseases that eventually may kill them. But for most, the variety of illnesses caused by jewelry work simply means bad health.

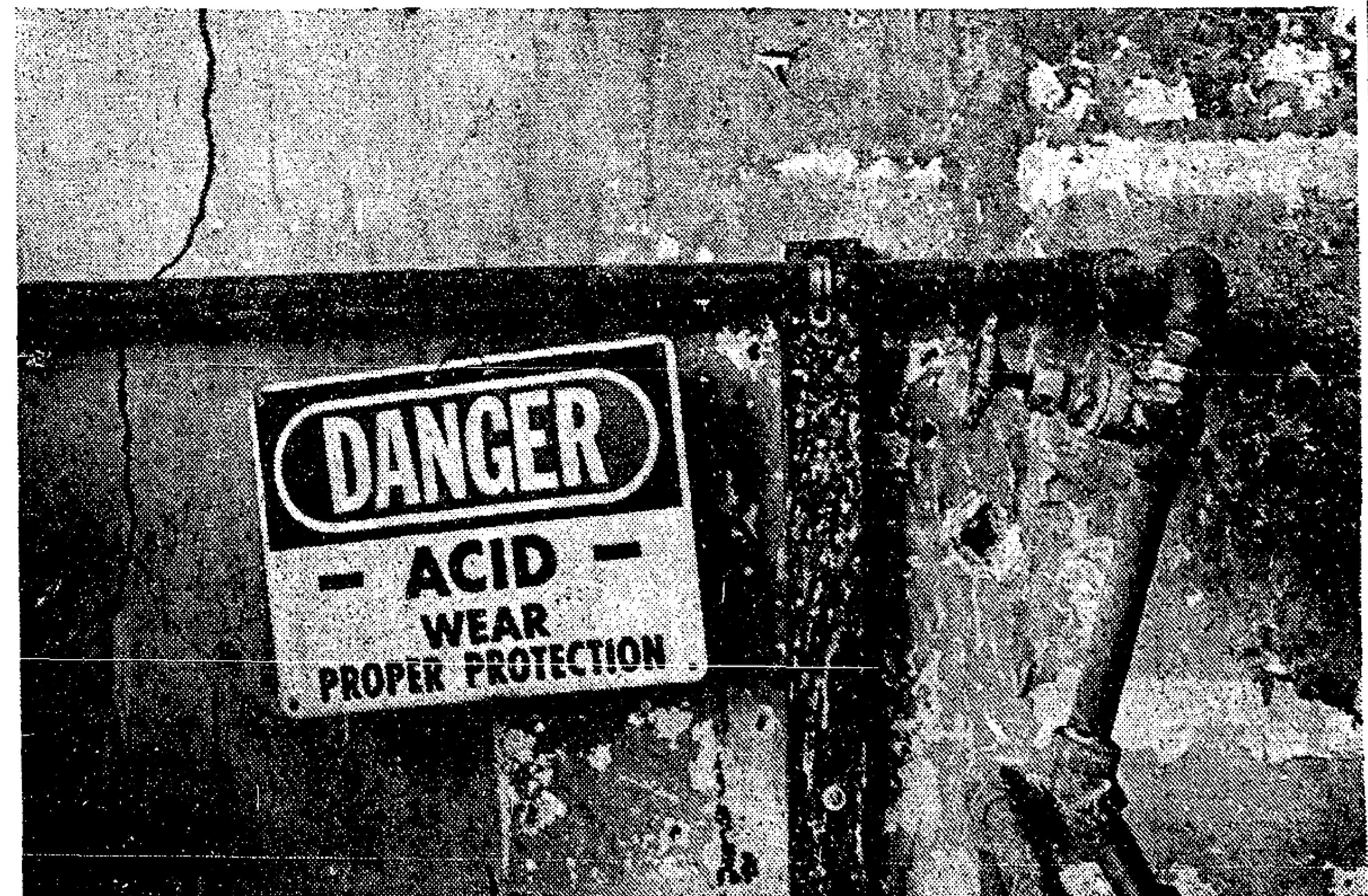
Carol Reiche is a 35-year-old single parent forced out of jewelry work by what her doctor says was a near fatal and "classic case" of occupational asthma, caused by working with epoxy at a Pawtucket jewelry shop. For the rest of her life, her doctor adds, she will suffer with the bronchial asthma he insists the jewelry industry gave her.

Michelle Edmonds, 28, of Providence lives with breathing problems that may never go away because she inhaled fumes in a jewelry gluing job that, she says, also called for her to burn glue off tweezers dipped in acetone.

Robin Allard, a Central Falls girl who quit school at 16 to work in a jewelry shop near home, was very nearly scarred because of epoxy paints and resins that swelled her face so badly she could not see for days.

Joseph McFadden, 27, trying to support a wife and child, plastered his arms and hands with ointments so he could keep a $146-a-week plating job that gave

Turn to HEALTH, Page A-10



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

DANGER: A variety of processes and chemicals in the jewelry industry have forced thousands out of the industry, and others to struggle along in poor health because they have no other place to go.

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Providence Journal (published as The Providence Journal) - June 24, 1981 - page 10
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—Journal-Bulletin Photo by RICHARD BENJAMIN

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

Valerie LePere, 27, suffers from lung problems she says were caused by work at Hedison Manufacturing Co. Harry Hedison, right, insists she was never sick from working at his plant.

Working in jewelry

Continued from Previous Page

A chief cause of such problems, the industry concedes, is the nickel that must be plated on costume jewelry before metals such as gold and silver are plated. Not only platers develop rashes; so do the benchworkers who later handle and assemble the plated jewelry. Indeed, skin ailments are endemic to the hundreds of small shops and factories that make up the core of the industry.

Epoxy, widely used to color costume jewelry in Rhode Island, is believed to be another major cause of dermatitis.

Jewelry manufacturers and industry spokesmen maintain that the problem affects limited numbers of workers and can be easily controlled.

But it does not.

In hundreds of shops and factories, ointments and salves are routinely provided to stave off rashes or reduce discomfort. Sometimes, as the industry claims, they work. Many times, they don't.

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JOSEPH McFADDEN, a plater, and Robin Allard, a young epoxy painter, are examples of what often happens to these workers.

McFadden, fresh out of the Navy and married with a young child, went to work for in 1977 at a Hazel Street plating shop in Pawtucket in hopes of learning a skill. There was no local ventilation over the chemical tanks, he said. The ceiling, he said, was pitted by acids that rose in the steam from the tanks; the shop air constantly smelled of chemicals. Periodically, he said, platers on the line had to step outside for a few minutes to "get some air."

After nearly a year in the shop, McFadden suddenly broke out in a rash that covered his arms, legs and upper body. When he scratched his itchy skin, it broke and bled. When he put cold water on it, it burned.

"I thought the nickel mix (plating solution) was too strong that day. I though it was a temporary thing," he says.

But it wasn't. For six months, McFadden applied the ointments prescribed by his doctors and tried repeatedly to return to his $146 a week job. But each time, his body was covered by the same burning rash.

With no income when he didn't work, McFadden turned to the state for help. But the state ruled he had a job-related illness and refused to pay him Social Security or Temporary Disability Insurance.

At the suggestion of a friend, McFadden filed for workers' compensation. Six months after filing, he received an award for medical benefits and two-thirds of the pay he lost while out sick.

Still, it was a hollow victory. Because his work left him with a permanent reaction to nickel, he was forced to abandon his career as a plater.

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HEALTH PROBLEMS developed far more rapidly and more seriously for Robin Allard. Two years ago, when she was 16, Miss Allard quit high school and went to work at Romex Inc., a small job shop above a casket company in Central Falls.

Several women used an ointment, she said, to cover rashes from the epoxy. At first, she said, she wasn't bothered. Then, on Oct. 26, the red rash of her coworkers broke out on her hands and arms.

"It was very itchy. But they all said, 'Don't worry, everybody gets it. Use the ointment, it'll go away.'"

The rash didn't go away. Over the next two weeks, Robin was taken by her mother twice to the emergency room at Roger Williams General Hospital for treatment.

Each time, the rash abated. On Nov. 8, she says, she left work with her face so badly swollen that she could barely see. That night, she returned to Roger Williams where doctors in the pediatric unit examined her and ordered her not to return to work.

The hospital treatment, physicians there confirm, was oral cortisone, antihistamines and soaks in medical solutions.

It took weeks for the swelling to go down and the rash to begin clearing.

When the Allards sought reimbursement from the company's insurance carrier, they learned the firm had no workers' insurance.

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THE COMPANY, however, did agree to a settlement that paid Miss Allard's medical bills and the time she was out of work. Charles Walker, former co-owner of the company, disputes Miss Allard's account and insists every step was taken to prevent workers from getting sick.

Inspectors for the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, he said, visited the shop afterwards, tested for three days and found no violations.

"We tried to be very careful. Whenever anybody got a rash, we sent them home and told them they couldn't work with epoxy anymore," he said.

He said the dangers of epoxy use "hit home" shortly after the shop was opened and his co-owner had a near fatal case of epoxy poisoning. "It got under her skin and into her blood," Walker said. "She nearly died. Believe me, it hit home," he said.

★ ★ ★

DR. CHARLES McDONALD, chief of dermatology at Roger Williams General Hospital, says he and physicians who work with him have seen what they believe are hundreds of cases of occupational dermatitis among Rhode Island jewelry workers.

McDonald, also affiliated with Brown University's School of Medicine, said the disease can often be remedied by simply removing a worker from the exposure that caused the rash.

But an undocumented and what McDonald believes may be "a surprisingly large" number of workers can develop permanent allergies that shut them out of the industry entirely. "Dermatosis cannot be passed off as a minor health problem," he said.

Nor, he adds, can it be dismissed as an employment nuisance.

"The bad part of dermatitis, economically, is that it can end employment in an industry, says McDonald. "I believe it is something that happens often in the jewelry work."

McDonald, and other physicians in the state, have no statistics on the number of workers disabled by skin problems. Though its cause is more easily documented than lung and other illnesses, McDonald says, most physicians simply do not report occupational disease cases.

When physicians do seek the data, he said, jewelry workers themselves often refuse to allow doctors to make the link.

McDonald cites his own experience as a physician at the Fox Point Neighborhood Center in Providence.

"I saw a lot of jewelry dermatitis there, at least I thought it was dermatitis caused by jewelry work. But I was never able to prove it," he says.

"For proof, you have to do patch testing. But 99 percent of the workers we saw didn't return for patch testing after they received initial treatment. Why? I think these people were afraid to that if we called their bosses or found them to be sensitive, they'd lose their jobs," he says.

"They just wanted something to help them bear with it.

"You have to remember, most of these people who work in jewelry have no skills and no training. If they lose the jobs they have, they lose their livelihoods."

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NOT ALL ILLNESSES affecting jewelry workers break down into easily defined categories. Often, workers in the factories are exposed to substances that can produce sickness. In Rhode Island factories, soldering, plating, polishing and degreasing are typically done in one large room with no walls or partitions.

Plant ventilation, state health officials concede, often mixes the fumes of various operations. No one operation is in violation of existing standards, but workers like Loretta Deitrich develop breathing problems that plague them the rest of their lives.

Many of the substances used in jewelry making, moreover, may produce more than one illness.

Epoxy swelled Robin Allard's face so bad, she could not see for days. But it poses more than a threat of skin disease among jewelry workers.

Carol Reicher, according to her doctor, developed asthma from inhaling fumes of epoxy she painted on trinkets for Crown Mark corporation in Pawtucket. Though she had no history of disease before working in jewelry, he adds, she will suffer with it the rest of her life even if she never walks into a jewelry factory again.

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STATE HEALTH Department officials concede that widespread and, in some cases, even major hazards "probably" exist in the jewelry industry.

"We know from our investigations and our experience there are a number of exposures out there that may be a very serious health problem," says Hickey of the state Health Department.

Hickey's appraisal is based, in part, on nearly 100 jewelry plant inspections his division performed between 1972 and 1978. Summaries of those previously undisclosed inspections show a pattern of sloppy handling of hazardous materials and far higher than permitted worker exposure to the materials that had frequently made workers sick.

Even in some plants where standards were not violated, health department inspectors found workers with job-related illnesses. In one plant, for example, the report noted that "several" workers were hospitalized because of lead poisoning, but tests at the plant showed no violation of the lead standard.

Despite such findings, the Health Department has ordered no comprehensive study of health problems of jewelry workers, nor has it launched a campaign to warn workers of job hazards.

"The problem is that you can't say totally that this disease or chronic condition is caused because you were exposed to this chemical or that chemical in jewelry manufacturing," Hickey said.

Hickey and Robert F. Weisberg, an occupational health specialist for the state, said they suspect that jewelry workers' lives may be shortened by their jobs, or they may live out their final years with job-related health problems.

"A person, a jewelry worker, may live five to 10 years less because of the exposure or suffer for five to 10 years from a disabling disease," Hickey says.

"There is risk in the industry," Hickey concludes. "It's a question of how much risk is it worth to continue to keep the jewelry industry going. Those are questions I can't answer. But somehow, the risk should be assessed and laid out for the worker to judge."

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CURRENTLY, HICKEY agrees, the risk is not being assessed and workers are not aware their jobs may be making them sick.

Plans to study worker health in the industry were announced by the Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths of America, a Providence-based trade association, at the end of 1979.

But the association, it has been learned, dropped study plans last summer.

George R. Frankovich, executive director of the association, said he ran into "several deadends" when he questioned state health officials and some physicians about sickness in the industry. As a result, he said, the trade association decided there was no need for further investigation.

But Frankovich said he believes state records are wrong and that there is illness among jewelry workers. "There is evidence of underreporting," Frankovich said. "There are, undoubtedly, some cases (of illness)."

He said he believes illness in the industry, however, is limited largely to workers who are allergic to such things as epoxy resins or nickel or have a "precondition" to such things as lung ailments.

"When these people are removed from the exposure, in most cases, they no longer have a problem," he said.

"I think there are people who are looking for a handout from workman's comp or something," says Frankovich. "And I think they're not averse to making false claims and getting away with what they can.

"On the other hand, I think there are some legitimate cases. I don't know where the truth is. But I think it's somewhere between your black and your white. A shade of gray. Now whether it's dark gray or light gray, I personally think its a light gray."

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WHILE industry officials debate shades of gray, jewelry workers who are getting sick are also being abandoned.

Employers routinely deny claims of worker illness. And insurance carriers routinely fight the few claims that are pursued.

When John Iacoucci was left with a disease slowly choking him to death, he was also left without an income.

Sick and broke, he asked his employer — Ideal Jewelry — for workers' compensation forms. Ideal president Eda Albanese, he said, refused to give them to him. ("He did not get sick from anything here," Mrs. Albanese told the Journal-Bulletin, charging he was in "cahoots" with his doctors to defraud her company.)

Ideal, one of the state's larger and cleaner factories, did pay him $4,553 in profit sharing money built up over 25 years with the company, Mrs. Albanese said. But there were no disability benefits.

On the advice of friends, he called a lawyer who obtained workers' compensation forms and filed a claim with Ideal's insurer, CNA of Connecticut.

Two weeks later, CNA wrote him back insisting in a formal letter that it had conducted an investigation. The letter concluded: "It has been determined that you do not have a compensatable injury under the Rhode Island Workmens Compensation Act."

"I couldn't believe everything the doctors were saying wasn't true," Iacoucci said. Facing mounting medical bills, he called another lawyer and filed a claim with the workers' compensation commission, the referee of such matters.

The case dragged through the commission for nearly a year. When the final hearings came, the insurance company offered no challenge to the testimony of Iacoucci's doctors and produced no "investigation" as it claimed it had made.

Iacoucci's award — $102 a week to live out the rest of his life.

Last year, for the first time in his life, he says, hisincome was so small he didn't have to file an income tax statement. "Getting by is hard these days," he said.

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GETTING BY IS hard, as well, for Valerie Lepere.

In 1977, Miss LePere, then 24 and living in Providence, was assigned to sand asbestos boards and work with jewelry solderers at Hedison Manufacturing's new plant in Lincoln. She became faint on the job and had to be driven to Rhode Island Group Health Association for treatment.

Her condition was diagnosed first as acute reaction to asbestos and, after further tests, as acute bronchitis caused from exposure to soldering fumes and asbestos fibers. She returned to work twice, got sick each time and eventually quit jewelry work.

Miss LePere — who had a medical history of good health before working in jewelry — was initially denied compensation by Hedison's insurance carrier for the illness, but eventually won a small settlement for what doctors determined were "severe lung problems" caused from work.

Last summer, the *Journal-Bulletin* found her in living in a barely furnished apartment in the Dorchester section of Boston, trying desperately to hold on to a minimum wage hospital job. Only 27, she now has chronic bronchitis and a three-year history of losing job after job because of lung illness that she is no longer compensated for.

Yet Harry Hedison, chairman Hedison Manufacturing, insists Miss LePere was never ill from work — even on the day she had to be taken from work after sanding asbestos boards.

"I would bet my life that entire thing is a crock of bullshit," he says.

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MISS LePERE and Iacoucci won some compensation.

Few jewelry workers, records show, ever get that far.

Statistics on compensation cases involving the jewelry industry are not maintained by the state.

But a *Journal-Bulletin* check of all cases settled last year — a year in which 3,700 claims were filed — turned up only 11 occupational health cases involving firms clearly identified as jewelry companies. Interviews with commission hearing officers confirmed that such cases are rare.

Iacoucci's was the largest settlement of all. Most cases checked involved only a few thousand dollars for workers who had to abandon jewelry work becasuse of their diseases.

Why so few cases? Industry officials such as Frankovich insist it is because there are few sick workers. But Dr. Sidney Braman, chief of the pulmonary division of Rhode Island Hospital, offers a different view.

"A lot of jewelry workers are afraid when you begin to get close to questions about working conditions," he says. "We've had people refuse to let us call their foremen to see what that spray was they were exposed to. They refuse to identify their employer."

"So that is a problem in the jewelry industry when it comes to questions of occupational disease. Many of these people are afraid they will lose their jobs."

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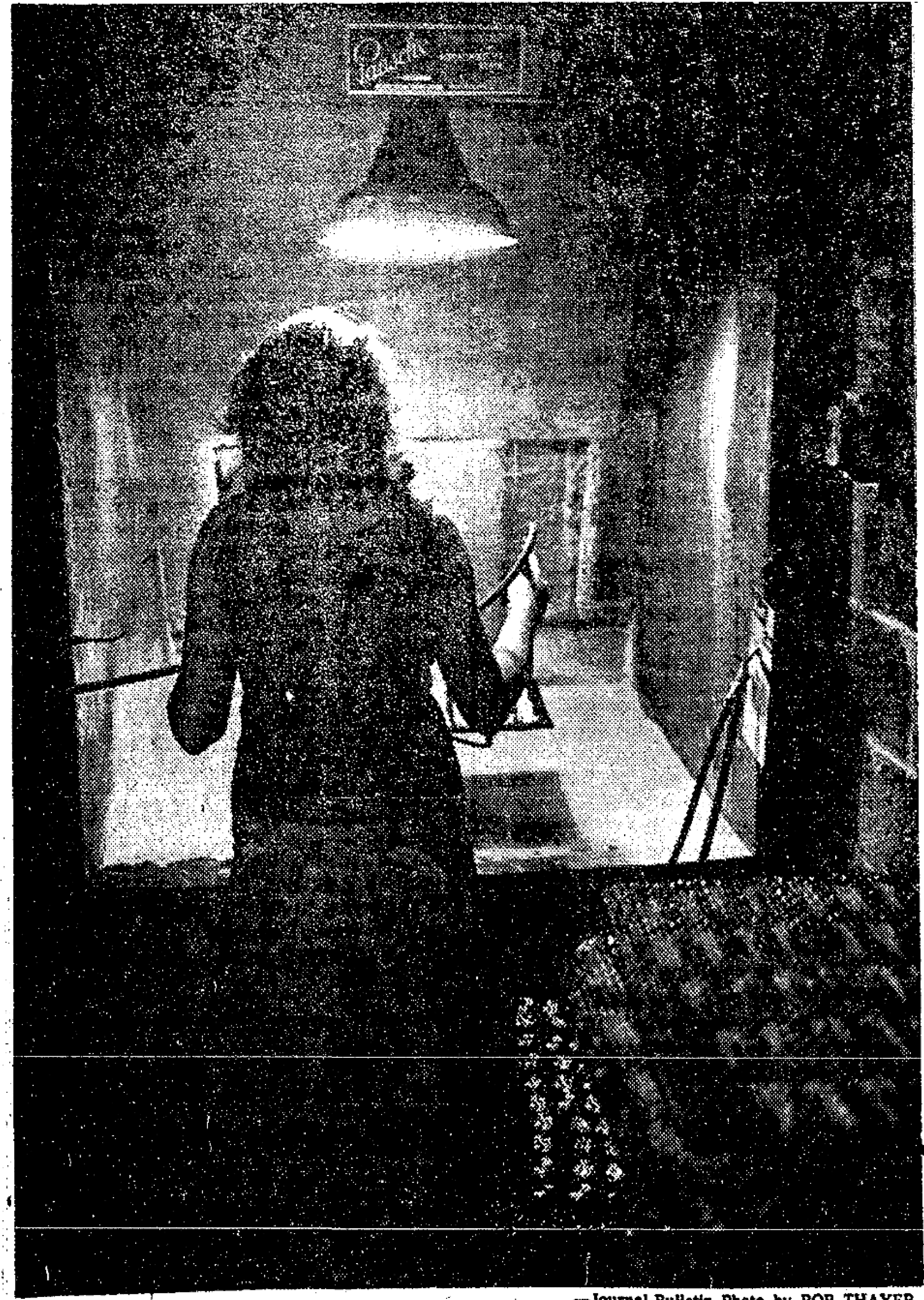
WORKERS LIKE Loretta Deitrich offer yet another view.

State law says she had a right to file for workers' compensation when her lung problems, diagnosed by her doctor as job causes, forced her out of the only work she knew. Still, she didn't.

"I wouldn't know how. I've never done anything like that before," she said.

'Don't believe any of it. He did not get any sickness over here.' —Jewelry shop owner



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

SPRAY PAINTING: Worker at a Providence plating company sprays jewelry in a spray booth. Excessive amounts of chemicals in spraying can cause central nervous system and lung problems.

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Garrahy to respond to jewelry stories

PROVIDENCE — Governor Garrahy said yesterday that he would cut short his trip to a Canadian conference, partly because he wants time to prepare a response to the *Journal-Bulletin* series on Rhode Island's jewelry industry.

The governor said that his response would be "comprehensive and intelligent" and that he may release it on July 3.

He said he wants to avoid substantive comment until the series is published in its entirety — the last installment is to run Friday — and to give himself time to meet with state labor and health officials and with leaders of the jewelry industry.

The governor said he considers the jewelry situation "pressing" enough to cut short his attendance at the annual conference of New England governors and eastern Canadian premiers in St. John's, Newfoundland.

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HE WAS SCHEDULED to fly to that conference today and was to return Friday, but because of the jewelry situation and other "economic" matters he will return late tomorrow.

Garrahy would not publicize the other "economic" matters that prompted him to want to be in Rhode Island on Friday.

Garrahy said he wants to take a position not only on the series but on "all aspects" of the industry. Asked what he meant by "all" aspects, he said that "there are some positive aspects" and that he wants to see if the series discusses those aspects.

"A substantial number of jewelry companies and employees have in recent years moved into modernized facilities and employ good labor practices," the governor said.

On the other hand, he said, there is "no question" that in the industry "there may be some abuses of good labor practices, of good working conditions and health standards."

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GARRAHY STOPPED SHORT of confirming it, but it appeared that a Governor's Task Force on Jewelry will become part of his response to the series. Garrahy promised creation of such a panel in his annual message to the General Assembly on Jan. 6.

At that time, the governor said:

"The jewelry industry, our largest manufacturing sector, has been hardest hit by this national recession. Plagued by general economic conditions, imports, waste-treatment problems and the high price of gold, it suffered a 12.3 percent decrease in employment this past year. I propose to build upon the efforts of the General Assembly's Jewelry Commission and form a Governor's Task Force on Jewelry."

While the unit has not yet been established, the governor said yesterday that "it has been very much on our mind." He said he soon would talk to jewelry industry leaders about it.

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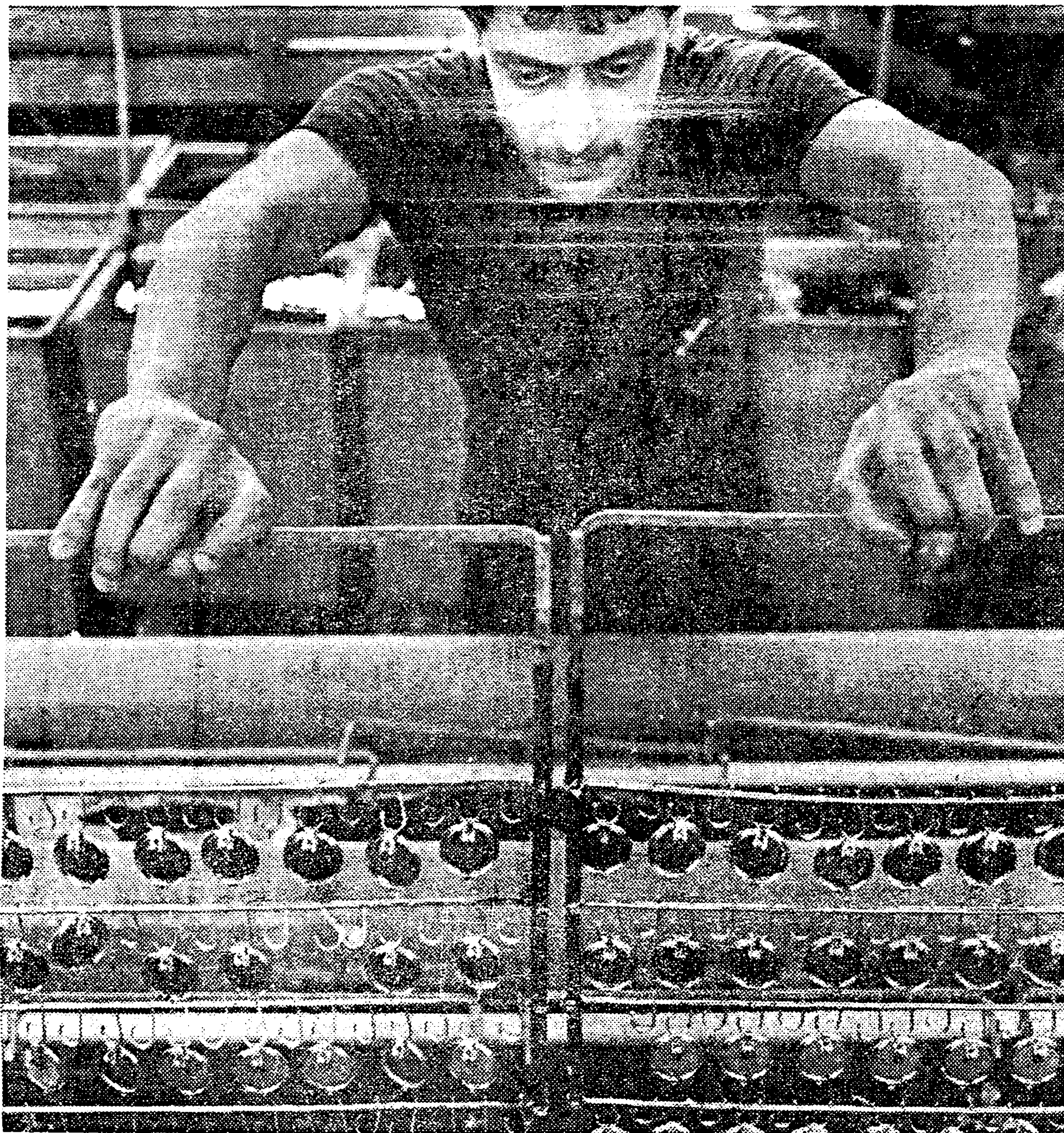
R.I., federal agencies fail to eliminate health perils

Working in jewelry

Part five of six parts

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by BOB THAYER

IN THE SHOP: A worker plates jewelry at a Pawtucket shop.

State and federal agencies charged with protecting Rhode Island workers have done little to force cleanups in the state's jewelry industry, despite evidence of health and safety problems.

The state Department of Health, which investigated complaints of health hazards in jewelry factories until 1979, requested but never forced factory owners to correct hazards even though major violations were commonly uncovered.

Indeed, in 88 jewelry firms inspected by the state over seven years, records show that health violations were found in 78. Sixty-one were found to have

Industry holds "emergency" meeting to discuss response to stories. Page A-3.

serious and often multiple hazards exposing hundreds of workers to chemicals and materials that could, and in several cases did, make them sick.

Yet state health officials, noting that their authority in industrial policing is murky, appear to have issued no formal orders for the plants to clean up.

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MEANWHILE, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which has the principal authority for industrial inspections in Rhode Island, has not inspected many of the state's jewelry firms.

In the 12 months ending last November, for example, OSHA's regional office in Providence conducted 221 general inspections of Rhode Island work places. Only seven were in jewelry factories.

In 1979, it performed three general inspections of jewelry factories while conducting more than 200 non-jewelry general inspections.

OSHA's record in the jewelry industry is only slightly better when it comes to investigating worker complaints. The agency went to eight jewelry factories on complaint inspections last year and 19 the year before.

A review of its inspection reports, meanwhile, indicates that while OSHA aggressively investigates physical safety hazards in jewelry plants, it sometimes does little to protect workers' health.

Like their state counterparts, federal inspectors found evidence of sick workers in some factories but took no formal action against the firms.

Sometimes OSHA failed to act when it had no standard against which to judge an offending chemical. At least once, it failed to investigate an alleged health hazard because inspectors sent to the plants were safety engineers not qualified to gauge health hazards.

The result is that the jewelry industry in Rhode Island — one of the nation's lowest paying and most marginally operated industries — has gone widely unsupervised.

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LINDA ANKU, area director of OSHA, concedes that the agency's ratio of jewelry inspections in Rhode Island is low. She insists, however, that it is justified because U.S. Labor Department statistics — on which OSHA safety inspection priorities are set — show low reported injury rates in the industry.

Though hazardous chemicals and materials are used in jewelry making, she adds, they are not among

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NewsBank

State, federal regulators have low profile

Jewelry

Continued from Page One

the more dangerous work place hazards and often are not used in sufficient quantity to require testing.

The plants may look bad and workers may complain of illness, she said, but the material and chemical exposures often fall within federal standards.

"We're not saying there is not a problem. We're saying we don't have the data to indicate problems in that industry," Miss Anku said.

"It is light industry. It is not hard-hat work," she said.

* * *

JEWELRY MAKING in Rhode Island is, as OSHA correctly notes, light manufacturing work and does not have the problems of heavy industries, but neither is it as regulated as those industries are.

Industrial hazards abound in the labyrinth of jewelry shops that make up an industry employing 30,000 workers. And so do poor work practices that often result in excessive exposures to acid fumes, lead, silica dust and solvents like trichloroethylene and perchloroethylene.

State inspection reports are one confirmation of this.

Summaries of 100 state inspections of 88 jewelry plants from 1972 through 1978 detail a pattern of poor handling of hazardous materials and high worker exposure to the materials throughout the industry.

In nearly 25 percent of the work places, acids and cyanides were found stored together, creating a potential for deadly hydrogen cyanide gas.

Improperly designed and operated degreasing tanks exposing workers to dangerous solvent fumes were also found repeatedly, as was poor ventilation in casting, soldering, plating and jewelry painting operations.

In several casting shops, silica dust from investment powders used to make molds was found in levels far above federal standards — creating the potential for permanent lung disease in workers breathing the dust.

At one jewelry epoxy shop, 13 cases of dermatitis were reported among employees who were required to mix epoxy resins without gloves and in ventilation that drew the fumes into the workers' faces.

* * *

OFTEN, the reports show, multiple problems were found.

A state inspection at a costume jewelry plant employing more than 100 workers is typical. Inspectors found polishing machines clogged with dust because of insufficient ventilation; workers exposed to lead fumes because of insufficient ventilation of the soldering operation; and 20 workers exposed to epoxy and methylene chloride fumes in the gluing department because of no ventilation. Higher than permitted noise levels were found in the press area of the plant, smoking was allowed in the lacquer spraying area despite the presence of what inspectors described as "highly flammable thinner vapors," and acids and cyanides were illegally stored together, creating a potential for hydrogen cyanide gas.

* * *

BUT THE STATE did not force the plants to clean up.

Instead, health officials sought what they call "consent agreements" with the owners to voluntarily clean up their plants.

In most cases the agreements were secured, says James Hickey, chief of the Health Department's Division of Occupational Health.

But how many of these agreements resulted in improvements is unknown.

Health officials did not reinspect most plants. The consent agreements, moreover, required only that plant owners notify the Health Department by letter when the cleanups were completed.

Health officials concede that workers who complained about hazards in their plants were never told that the resulting inspections might not result in cleanups.

"The follow-up was often not there," Hickey agreed. "It means the conditions in some cases are serious, but the solutions have dragged on or nothing has been done."

Still, Hickey and Dr. Joseph Cannon, director of the Health Department, defend the state's policy of seeking voluntary compliance on the ground that they have questionable authority in industrial inspections.

Specific authority for industrial inspections in Rhode Island, they note, rests with the federal OSHA. Hickey and Cannon said the Health Department pushed for approval of a state plan in 1972 that would have split inspection authority between OSHA and state agencies, but the plan was defeated.

As a result, only in cases where health inspectors spot what both men called "grave and imminent" health threats is the Health Department's power clear.

Such things as exposure to high levels of silica dust in casting, which can lead to fatal and irreversible lung disease, is not considered an imminent threat, Hickey says, because the disease takes years to develop.

* * *

WHY THEN, did the state undertake the inspections?

In part, Hickey maintained, it was because of steady complaints his division received about health problems in jewelry factories. Many of the complaints, he added, were from people who said they had called OSHA and hadn't gotten satisfaction.

(Prior to 1979, OSHA did not respond to complaints in industry unless they were from workers and unless the workers agreed to sign the complaints. Many industry workers, fearful of losing their jobs, refuse to make such complaints, Hickey says.)

"OSHA just wasn't responding to these complaints, so we got them," Hickey said.

Hickey said his division felt a need to respond to complaints, and it has always maintained that it has broad, if somewhat murky, responsibility for occupational health in the state. "We felt we needed to see what was out there. We wanted to establish a presence in the industry," he said.

Though the presence did not carry the full weight of the law, it did result in improvements in "at least some factories" that otherwise would not have been made, Hickey maintained.

"I think we did some good," he said.

* * *

THOUGH THEY have done little about it, state health officials agree that their inspection program points to "serious health problems" in at least some of the jewelry factories, as Hickey maintains.

But in most cases, Hickey added, the problems involve long-term, but relatively low-level exposure to chemical and material fumes that individually may not violate any standard.

The number and variety of jewelry manufacturing shops, he adds, makes it even harder to study the industry and draw firm conclusions on health threats.

"It's much easier to look at chemicals in a single big company than a number of small companies," Hickey said. "And in the jewelry industry, you have many small companies."

Hickey defends his department's efforts in the industry, but he says more should be done. "We should be doing more self-initiated studies," he concluded.

Such studies are not being done and are not planned. Indeed, in 1979 the Health Department stopped going out on complaint inspections in the jewelry industry altogether.

Currently, it inspects jewelry plants only when the owner of the plant specifically requests the inspection. Even then the department only inspects those items that plant owners want inspected.

The Health Department calls it a "consultant program," with the limited goal of advising plant owners who want to make improvements.

Records of those inspections are secret, the Health Department maintains, because the inspections are voluntary.

* * *

OSHA IS the only agency that inspects the jewelry industry for overall enforcement of health and safety standards.

But its inspections are few, and the results mixed.

In 1979 — the year the state inspection efforts stopped — OSHA performed only 22 complaint and general inspections in the state's 1,200 jewelry shops and factories.

That number comes from a count of inspection reports provided by OSHA for all firms it lists in costume and precious metal jewelry categories.

Local OSHA officials, conceding that the number of inspections is low, insist that jewelry manufacturing poses generally low risks to the health and safety of workers.

But its 1979 inspections indicate otherwise.

Serious and often multiple violations were cited in seven of the 22 factories inspected, and less serious violations in nine others.

Further, the reports show that while safety hazards were aggressively investigated and frequently cited, complaints of health hazards were often given little attention despite evidence that they existed and in some cases were making workers sick.

In some cases, no investigation of health hazards appears to have been made, although complaints of such hazards are what brought OSHA to the plant.

An OSHA inspection in June, 1979, at the Spencer Co., a Cranston jewelry manufacturer, is an example.

* * *

THOUGH OSHA protects the identity of workers who complain of industrial hazards, the *Journal-Bulletin* learned that the federal agency agreed to inspect Spencer at the request of John Burbank, then a 25-year-old investment mixer at the firm.

Burbank, interviewed by the newspaper, says he called OSHA in May, 1979, and complained about lack of ventilation in the casting room where, he said, silica-contaminated investment powder was scooped dry from a barrel, weighed and mixed, causing excessive dust in the room.

A notice on the investment containers, he said, advised that the powder contained a blend of silica and plaster and warned workers against breathing its dust.

He said he also alleged high smoke levels in the casting room, use of asbestos gloves, electric shocks from the centrifuge casting machines, and burns from hot metal splashed from the machines.

On June 12, six weeks after Burbank says he complained, two OSHA inspectors arrived at the plant. But the inspectors were safety engineers, not industrial hygienists. They had come, the reports show, to investigate only Burbank's safety complaints of shocks from the casting machines and splashing of hot metal from the machines.

Burbank's other complaints of health hazards, the main reason he called OSHA, were not even listed by OSHA on the agency's complaint form.

Burbank didn't know this. He says he waited for the inspectors to question workers about the health hazards, but no worker interviews were conducted. Although worried about his job, he says, he approached the inspectors and demanded to be interviewed in private.

The interview, he said, was conducted in front of plant supervisors.

Still, he says, he repeated his complaints. Copies of the inspection report confirm this.

Though the inspectors' report noted Burbank's complaints, the alleged hazards were not inspected.

The inspectors' report noted that an inspection by an industrial hygienist the year before showed no violations at Spencer. Burbank's complaints, the report said, would be turned over to OSHA's industrial hygiene section for a possible follow-up inspection.

In the end, the plant was cited for a minor safety hazard: failure to properly ground the casting units. The other safety violations alleged by Burbank were unfounded, according to OSHA.

But Burbank's complaints of health hazards, the main reason he said he called OSHA, were not investigated. OSHA officials said they determined, based on reports of the safety inspectors, that the investment operation had not changed substantially since the 1978 inspection and, therefore, did not have to be looked at again.

* * *

BURBANK QUIT his job several weeks later. OSHA records show no follow-up inspection was done at the plant through 1979. But some hazard does appear to have existed in the plant.

In December, 1979, Burbank's father, a Connecticut radiologist, wrote to Dr. Joseph Cannon, director of the Rhode Island Health Department, complaining of the lack of inspection on his son's complaints.

Dr. John Burbank urged the state to take action, and noted in his letter that exposure to high levels of silica dust leads to silicosis, an irreversible destruction of lung tissue.

On Jan. 14, 1980, Frederick A. Siino, associate director of health, wrote back to Dr. Burbank.

"A preliminary survey of the facility (Spencer) confirmed that a potential health hazard does exist," Siino reported. He added that Spencer management had agreed voluntarily, under the Health Department's consultant program, for a "complete check of the situation in order that corrections be made."

As for OSHA: "I had faith in OSHA before I called them," said young Burbank. "I don't have faith in them now."

* * *

TO BE SURE, OSHA did conduct several extensive health inspections in 1979 and found extensive violations. At one Providence plant, OSHA inspectors assessed several fines totalling $600 for serious exposures to the chemical trichloroethylene and ordered the plant to provide respirators to employees handling the chemical.

At another Providence plant, hazardous storage of chemicals, excessive worker exposure to the perchloroethylene and several other health violations resulted in more than $1,000 in fines.

But such inspections of health hazards were the exception.

At Spencer, OSHA failed to investigate an alleged hazard. At another inspection, it failed to correct hazards because it lacked standards to cite. Still other reports conclude that offending substances were hastily removed — or operations shut down — when inspectors arrived. Two examples:

- At Femic Inc., a small costume jewelry firm in North Providence, OSHA found workers exposed to plasticizer fumes and reported probable worker illness from the exposure. OSHA also noted that exposure to the fumes was in a small, windowless room and described the air as "stale." The firm was not cited for any violation. The reason: OSHA had no standard against which to measure the exposure, even though its inspectors agreed the exposure appeared to be making workers ill.
- At a small Cranston job shop where workers complained that fumes of a cleaning chemical were causing illness, an OSHA inspector sampled exposure to acetone and found no violations. However, the inspection report noted that employees had complained of another chemical that was hastily removed by the plant owner just before the OSHA inspection. The inspection report noted that employees, all making minimum wage, feared for their jobs and were reluctant to be interviewed.

When the inspector returned to his car, he found a note on the windshield detailing alleged use of methylene chloride without protection, ventilation or gloves. The chemical was removed just before the inspection and employees were ordered to clean the entire shop, according to the note. The OSHA inspector reported that while the owner flatly denied using methylene chloride, the note on the car "confirmed my opinion" a hazard had existed. Still, the inspector concluded, the hazard was only a one-time occurrence. No further check of the shop was done.

* * *

OSHA, one official correctly noted, cannot cite a company for violations they do not physically find or for which they have no standards.

Meanwhile, Linda Anku, OSHA's regional director, insists that follow-up inspections are only done when there is clear evidence a serious violation is not being corrected.

"We only have so many people. We have to pick," she said.

While jewelry plant inspections have been limited in recent years, she added, OSHA inspectors did extensively survey plants in the early 1970s. Records, she said, show that about 500 of the state's estimated 1,500 jewelry shops at the time were visited by federal inspectors.

"I think we have a good idea what's out there," Miss Anku concluded.

But OSHA officials, including Miss Anku, concede that the early jewelry plant inspections were superficial looks at the plants done while the agency was young and establishing its inspection procedures and priorities.

They also concede that there is evidence that at least some major hazards are pervasive in jewelry shops they have not inspected.

"The degreaser operations are a major problem in jewelry in my opinion," says Kip Hartman, chief of OSHA's industrial hygiene section. "They are not properly constucted, not properly installed and not properly operated. And we know the exposures in those cases can cause serious harm."

"There is a real potential for tragedy in degreasing operations," he said.

But this and other hazards in jewelry operations, he said, are not clear-cut. In investment mixing, he maintained, the investment powder is "loaded with silica" which can lead to longterm lung damage. "But we go into a place and find they mix the investment for maybe a half-hour a day. It's dangerous. But it's not the kind of thing where there is a continued exposure."

Epoxy work, he added, is another potential hazard because of the polyester resins and hardeners used. So are acid dip operations in plating shops and plating shops in general.

"But the exposures in these areas are not very high. We just don't find them violating standards," Hartman said.

"People have a lot of complaints in jewelry shops. Sickness in the shops is a common complaint. But when we go in and measure exposures, they just do not exceed the standards," he said.

Health Department inspection reports document safety hazards on the job

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

Summary reports on nearly 100 inspections conducted by the state Department of Health on Rhode Island jewelry plants document a grim picture of health conditions in the industry.

The reports were compiled by the Rhode Island Lung Association in an attempt to identify air contaminant hazards in jewelry manufacturing. The names of the jewelry plants are deleted from the reports because health officials maintain the inspection findings are not public information.

Nonetheless, officials verified as accurate copies of the summaries obtained by the *Journal-Bulletin.*

Indeed, James Hickey, chief of the Health Department's Division of Occupational Health, said some of the summaries "understate" conditions described in the state's original inspection reports.

The following summaries are representative of the sizes and types of manufacturing operations surveyed.

General manufacturer, 250-499 employees.
Worker's complaint: Poorly ventilated polishing operation.
Department's finding: Inadequate exhaust on polishers. Vapor degreaser cooling unit found to be "entirely inadequate," exposing plating workers to solvent fumes. Tanks in plating department not labeled. Acids and cyanides stored next to each other. Empty contaminated cyanide drums used as rubbish containers.

Ring manufacturer, 100-249 employees.
Complaint: Heavy brass fumes from ring casting.
Finding: No metal fume problem documented. But entire casting area found heavily contaminated with silica dust from investment casting. Exposures measured 11 times over limit during mixing, eight times over limit during knockout and two times during blasting.

Polishing shop, 1-49 employees.
Complaint: Trichloroethylene exposure making worker sick.
Finding: Old trichloroethylene degreaser with "very poor" cooling to control vapor. Polishing units had homemade ventilation system that did not remove dust.

Plating shop, 1-49 employees.
Complaint: Hospital report of worker intoxicated and coughing blood from inhaling degreasing fumes.
Finding: Perchloroethylene degreaser with no vapor cooling system and work being removed wet. Employees smoking near vapor fumes. Chemicals stored sloppily in storage and bright dip area. Acids and cyanides stored together in plating, obstructing a fire exit. Acid and cyanide plating tanks unmarked, no safety shower or eye wash for emergencies, and no protective gloves or glasses in plating area.

Small manufacturer, 50-99 employees.
Complaint: Plating fumes making worker sick.
Finding: Sodium cyanide, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid tanks with no ventilation. Cyanide drums used for other purposes, open cyanide drum next to acids, plating tanks not identified. No shower or eye wash in plating room.

Small casting shop, 1-49 employees.
Complaint: Physician report of patient with acute beryllium lung disease from copper casting.
Finding: Melting furnace with no hood, centrifugal casting machine not hooded, and no general room exhaust. No exhaust for control of silica in investment mixing and knockdown.

Large manufacturer, 100-249 employees.
Complaint: Thirteen cases of dermatitis from use of epoxy resins.
Finding: No gloves being worn. Exhaust system brought vapors up through workers' breathing zones.

Large manufacturer, 500 employees.
Complaint: Soldering fumes making workers sick.
Finding: Twenty solderers working on white metal with acid solder flux of 40 percent lead. No local exhaust to remove "heavy solder fumes." Company nurse had record of illness caused by fumes, but never reported to management for corrective measures.

Large manufacturer, 100-249 employees.
Complaint: Employee inhaling polishing dust.
Finding: Ventilation system for polishing wheels clogged with dust. Soldering operation with eight workers exposed to lead fumes because of no ventilation. Twenty workers in gluing operation exposed to epoxy and methylene chloride fumes because of no ventilation. High noise levels found around presses and ultrasonic cleaners. Smoking allowed in lacquer spraying area despite highly flammable thinner vapors. Acids and cyanides stored together in tubbing and dipping areas.

Large manufacturer, 250-499 employees.
Complaint: Employee with headaches and dizziness from gluing operation.
Finding: Gluing operation ventilated. But workers exposed to beryllium in casting. Heavy dust levels also found in melting, casting and grinding areas. Inefficient exhaust in melting and grinding areas and no exhaust for casting. Degreaser operators exposed to "heavy solvent" fumes.

Large manufacturer, 250-499 employees.
Complaint: Employee suffering headaches and loss of memory from degreasing operations.
Finding: Perchloroethylene degreaser with no vapor cooling system and poor ventilation.

Large manufacturer, 500 employees.
Complaint: Self initiated by health department.
Finding: Comtaminated cyanide drums used to store other chemicals and rubbish. Degreasing unit not vented properly, emitting excessive trichloroethylene. Sandblasting cabinet emitting silica because it was not enclosed. Excessive noise levels found around ultrasonic washers, polishers, sandblasting, drop presses, and steam heating of acid baths.

Small manufacturer, 50-99 employees.
Complaint: Employees exposed to fumes in plastic casting and epoxy gluing operation.
Finding: Plant had no ventilation for either operation. Inspectors also found cyanide stored in open drums with potential for hydrogen cyanide production.

Large manufacturer, 250-500 employees.
Complaint: Solderer fears use of asbestos boards in soldering.
Finding: Dust sampled from soldering room floor confirms presence of asbestos.

Small manufacturer, less than 49 employees.
Complaint: Adjoining firm bothered by odors.
Finding: Employees pouring and molding polyster resin with excessive exposures to CO and MEK because canopy hood over pouring table was of poor design and low air flow volume. Two employees sanding plastic molds were exposed to excessive dust because they were using poorly designed, handmade collection system. Two exhaust booths for lacquering had poor exhaust and sprayed articles were left to dry in room air without ventilation.

Small manufacturer, 1-49 employees.
Complaint: Worker with chronic cyanide poisoning.
Finding: Workers in small, crowded room dipping jewelry directly from acid to cyanide baths.

Small manufacturer, 1-49 employees.
Complaint: Worker complaint of trichloroethylene fumes.
Finding: Average trichloroethylene exposure of degreaser operators was 378 ppm (parts per million) with a high of 788 ppm. (Permitted exposure is 100 ppm.) Poor location and operation of degreaser. Injection jewelry molding operation had no exhaust at all, with exposures documented to styrene, polypropylene and polyethylene fumes. Blow molding operation with polyethylene and polyvinyl acetate had no ventilation. Grinders exposed 12 employees to noise levels well in excess of permitted levels.

Small manufacturer, 50-100 employees.
Complaint: Worker with nosebleeds and headaches from solvent degreaser.
Finding: Trichloroethylene degreaser leaking badly.

Small metal shop, 1-50 employees.
Complaint: Cyanide vapors bothering workers. Company opens windows when tests show high HCN levels in shop.
Finding: Exhaust systems in plating area and laboratory "very inefficient" in removing nitric, hydrochloric and sulfuric acid fumes. Exhaust systems in melting department found inadequate to remove nonferrous metal fumes. Poor housekeeping throughout shop, hazardous placement of open acid tanks, lack of safety precautions during plating, obstructed fire extinguishers and no emergency shower or eye wash facilities as required for platers.

Jewelry plating shop, 1-50 employees.
Complaint: Worker complained of excessive acid fumes.
Finding: No exhaust for heated cyanide plating bath. Exhaust inadequate for lacquering operation that used lacquer containing 60 percent toluene, 12 percent isopropanol. Excessive noise levels around tumbling and burnishing operations. Storage of cyanides, ammonium chloride, sodium hydroxide and lacquers presented toxic gas and explosion hazards. "Very poor" housekeeping in shop, with floor flooded with water.

Jewelry plastic casting, 1-50 employees.
Complaint: Company in floor below complained of plastic solvents leaking through roof and making employees sick.
Finding: Ventilation inadequate for polyester resin casting and coloring operation. Only two window fans serving casting operation. Exposures to MEK, hydrogen peroxide, hardeners, lacquer thinner and methylene chloride. "Very poor" housekeeping, no organized chemical storage, no fire extinguishers. Sprinkler system of factory not in operation.

Jewelry assembly, 1-50 employees.
Complaint: Worker with severe dermatitis and swelling of eyes from gluing stones on rings with epoxy resins.
Finding: Survey found gluing in small unventilated room, employees not wearing gloves, epoxy containers open and poor housekeeping. Glue was based on polyether amines.

What's ahead

The series will continue tomorrow in the *Journal* and *Evening Bulletin.*

Tomorrow: Conclusion: Can, and should, the jewelry industry be cleaned up?

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Jewelry group calls for publicity on improvements in industry

By PETER PERL
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — About 300 members of the Rhode Island jewelry industry's largest trade group met in an "emergency" session yesterday to discuss the industry response to a *Journal-Bulletin* series detailing health, safety and legal abuses in the jewelry business.

The meeting of the Manufacturing Jewelers & Silversmiths of America at the Biltmore Plaza was closed to the public and the press, and MJSA executive director George R. Frankovich could not be reached for comment.

But a jewelry executive who attended the 90-minute session said the MJSA has formed a committee to collect data from its member companies to determine the extent of health problems and other troubles in the industry. The *Journal-Bulletin* reported yesterday that MJSA last year rejected plans to study jewelry health problems because it feared lawsuits and "undesirable" union activity. It was unclear last night whether the industry was changing that position.

The executive, who asked not to be named, said several industry leaders last night acknowledged the existence of poor working conditions outlined by the newspaper, but said they believed such problems were confined to a limited number of small firms.

"They were calm about it," he said. "There was no real screaming or yelling. Several people said there was value (to the newspaper reports) but they felt that the stories of some of the better, cleaner firms should have been included."

He said the discussion focused on how to upgrade some of the poorer jewelry shops and how to publicize the successful efforts of some factory owners to improve working conditions.

"The tone of the article made it seem the whole industry is bad," said another MJSA member after the meeting. "We have taken a lot of pride in our efforts to clean up and we have made some great strides — low worker turnover, top benefit packages and all — and we feel quite hurt about this and want to make sure some of this side is brought out."

In a letter to member firms, MJSA said it called last night's meeting to discuss what it called "very derogatory" articles and to form a special committee to deal with the situation.

The association said it was calling the meeting to seek "short-range and long-range suggestions for improvement of the industry image." It could not be learned what steps the industry plans to accomplish this.

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duction of books, Bibles and magazines. Page A-3. force to patrol the Sinai desert. Page A-2. THREE SEEDED PLAYERS, Brian Teac

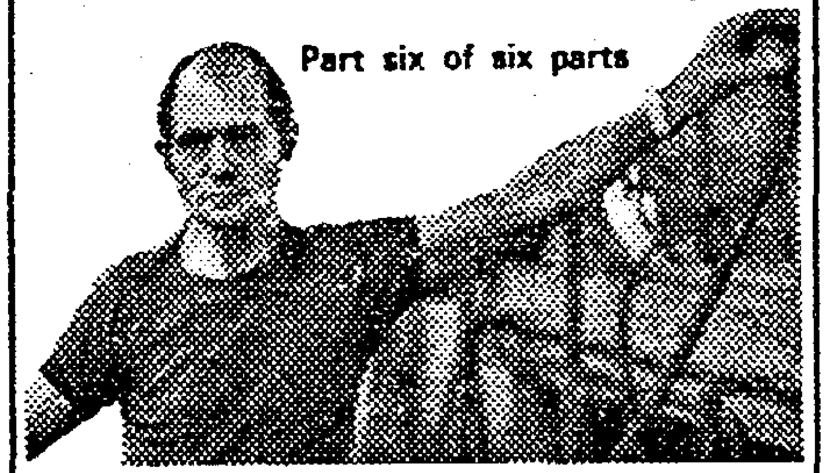
—Journal-Bulletin Photo by JOHN L. HANLON

IDEAL JEWELRY: This shop on Kenny Drive, Cranston, is typical of the modern, clean factories built by some owners.

Industry reforms urged for a healthier future

Working in jewelry

Part six of six parts



By **BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD**
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

What needs to be done to clean up the jewelry industry in Rhode Island?

Experts in the health profession, individuals in the industry and officials from enforcement agencies were questioned by the *Journal-Bulletin*. Their recommendations:

- A health study of jewelry workers in the state.
- Better reporting by doctors of suspected industry-related illnesses.
- Programs to alert workers and employers to the problems of occupational safety and health.
- Enforcement of the laws against homework.

Neither industry nor government has heretofore made a serious effort to improve the conditions in which about 30,000 people work.

Despite evidence of sickness in the industry, there has been no health study of jewelry workers.

Despite evidence of illegal work practices in the industry, there have been no prosecutions of manufacturers or jobbers.

State health officials — citing limited jurisdiction — no longer respond to complaints of poor working conditions in jewelry shops, although they know such conditions exist.

Federal officials don't acknowledge that poor conditions are widespread, although they do inspect some plants.

"Somehow (the industry) should be made to clean up," says Roberta Orticerio, chief of the state's Division of Labor Standards. The questions remain. Who should clean it up? How should they do it? Where should they start?

Health

No one knows how many people are sick from working in jewelry. It remains the major unanswered question about jewelry work.

Doctors know people are getting sick from their work.

John Iacoucci is slowly choking to death.

Loretta Deitrich has developed bronchitis.

Robin Allard's face swelled so badly she could not see.

The list goes on into the thousands, but there has been no health study of jewelry workers.

Robert Jones, an occupational specialist with the Rhode Island Lung Association, coordinated a study of air contaminants in the industry. He feels a major study of jewelry workers' health is long overdue.

"You're dealing with a lot of people in jewelry. There are hazards. And the work practices out there aren't good," said Jones. "You can't tell me there isn't a public health problem out there."

What is needed, Jones maintains, is a comprehensive look at the death records of jewelry workers over a span of years and a detailed health survey of workers in the shops today.

"We need a team of people to do this. We need access to the people to do this, particularly in the smaller firms. We

Turn to JEWELRY, Page A-6

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Working in jewelry

Continued from Page One

need access to the records," said Jones. "This is a very complex picture. But I think somebody ought to be looking at the health status of these people. And an epidemiology approach is the only way to get to the problem."

★ ★ ★

DR. DENIS BAILLARGEON, on the specialty medicine staff of the Rhode Island Group Health Association in Providence, agrees. Last year he proposed such a study to the Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths of America. They rejected it.

Baillargeon insists some such study should be done by either an industry-hired physician, a private medical group or state health officials.

"What's needed is a prospective epidemiology study to follow these people along," he said. "Then maybe we'll have some answers."

"Who will do such a study is another problem," he added. He noted he has suggested involvement by the state Health Department and the industry with no response. "There's so much political stuff here, nobody wants to be involved."

★ ★ ★

THE PLANNING office of the state Department of Health is getting involved in studies of death records of all workers in Rhode Island as part of an effort to identify what may be "problem" occupations.

Bruce Kelley, chief of the Office of Health System Planning, said a study will begin this year to determine the causes of deaths of all Rhode Island workers who died from 1972 to 1980.

However, the study, an outgrowth of a limited look at death records between 1968 and 1972, will not focus on the jewelry work force, Kelley said. But it should be comprehensive enough, he added, to identify a potential problem in jewelry work if one is widespread.

"We suspect in the overall that occupational health problems are a major health problem in Rhode Island," Kelley said. "As for jewelry, we do not have enough data. But stomach cancer may be one problem."

If Rhode Island were to focus on the health problems of jewelry workers, Kelley concluded, additional emphasis could be put on studying death records in that area.

★ ★ ★

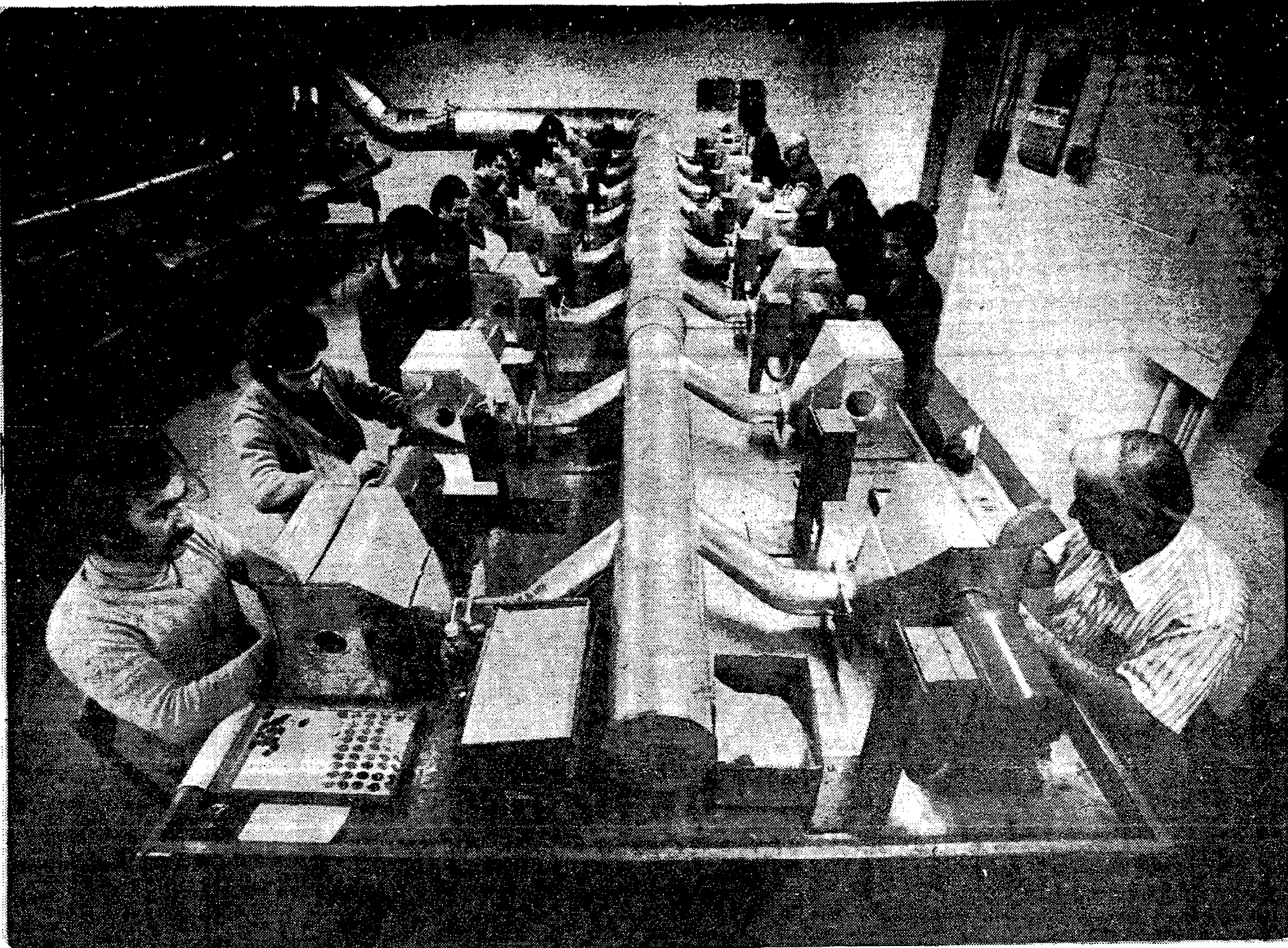
PHYSICIANS are required by state law to report cases of occupational disease to the Health Department. Only a few obey that law.

"We very infrequently receive a report," says James Hickey, chief of the Health Department's Division of Occupational Health.

To get the reports, Hickey adds, would require a "major effort" on the part of the Health Department. That alone, he said, would still not be enough to measure illness in the industry.

"There is a whole area of non-acute illness that would not be picked up," he said. "I think what is needed overall is data from employment security, workers' compensation and the physicians if you want to get a complete picture."

Before such a program is undertaken, he said, a need would have to be established.



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by JOHN L. HANLON

THE LARGER PLANT: Ideal Jewelry, Cranston, closed its old casting operation, and now operates a modern, clean and odorless shop.

28-18-1. Purpose of chapter. — The employment of workers in industry in the state of Rhode Island under conditions resulting in wages unreasonably low and conditions injurious to their health and general welfare is a matter of grave and vital public concern. Any conditions of employment especially fostering such working conditions are therefore destructive of purposes already accepted as sound public

STATE LAW: Section 28-18 of the Laws of the State of Rhode Island deals with homework and the penalty for violations.

Working conditions

There are few disinterested experts to testify on the poorly lit, unventilated shops where people work over hazardous machines, inhaling contaminated air. But there are tens of thousands of witnesses. Among them:

Carl Pfanstiehl tore his finger open on a casting machine, and lost an afternoon's pay because he didn't go right back to work after doctors stitched the wound.

Javier Gomez, the 27-year-old plater in the mill complex at 50 Aleppo St., had to skip over broken floor boards while he carried jewelry racks past tanks of acid and cyanide.

Lottie Riccitelli, a widow with two small children, painted epoxy on jewelry for less than the minimum wage, even though the owner of the shop she worked for said he made over $100,000 in one year she did the work. She was glad to have the work.

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THE QUESTION these and other jewelry workers raise, often unintentionally, is what is being done to correct these hazards or improve their working conditions?.

Some of the correction is coming from the shop owners themselves. Within the industry there are modern, clean operations. These shops were not mandated, they were built by their owners. Among them are several that the *Journal-Bulletin* visited. They are among the state's larger factories. All are well-lighted, relatively clean, and offer their workers benefits.

At American Ring in East Providence, Renato Calendrilli, who began as an immigrant jewelry worker himself, allowed a reporter to tour his plant.

Nearly all of his workers were Portuguese immigrants, many of whom had come to this country under his sponsorship. Many, he acknowledged, earned just above minimum wage. But they had jobs, full benefits, and — though the factory was on the second floor of an older brick building — a very clean work place.

Ideal Jewelry — where doctors have determined that Iacoucci got sick — is the most recent addition to the state's new plants. It has closed the casting operations — where Iacoucci worked in the old plant — and the new factory boasts the most modern, clean, and odorless plating room visited.

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MOST OFTEN nothing is being done to improve conditions.

Not by the government. Not by the industry and not by the workers themselves.

The state will inspect a jewelry business for job hazards only when the firms invite the state into its plants.

"We're finding hazards and we're correcting hazards," James Hickey, state occupational chief, says of the program. They are. But only in the better factories that seek improvements, or those already inspected by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and under orders to clean up.

OSHA's regional office in Providence — the one charged with insuring safe and clean work places in Rhode Island — has an elaborate system it must follow for taking and categorizing complaints and inspecting and monitoring work places. It is a huge job and the jewelry industry, in recent years at least, hasn't been high on OSHA's priority list.

"We can never get to all of them. I think we're doing the best we can with the resources we have," says Linda Anku, area director of OSHA.

Does she need more help?

"I'm not asking for more resources," she said. What is needed, she said, are programs to alert and train workers, employers and physicians to problems of occupational safety and health.

"Lack of recognition is a big problem in many industries," she says.

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OSHA has critics. "I do not think OSHA has been very effective in the jewelry industry," says David Snapp. He is the director of the Rhode Island Committee on Occuptaional Safety and Health (RICOSH), a private occupational health group financed in part by unions and in part by federal OSHA.

Snapp says says meaningful plant inspections are lacking.

For the last eight months RICOSH has been encouraging non-union workers to call OSHA with complaints, Snapp said. Often workers would call him, but not give their names or call back. When they did and OSHA inspected on the complaint, he said, the results were not satisfactory.

"You're dealing with people who are afraid to lose their jobs. Just getting them to sign a complaint is a major accomplishment," Snapp said. This despite the fact OSHA protects the worker's identity. If nothing happens as a result of the complaint, he said, particularly if a worker is getting ill from an exposure that violates no federal standard, the word spreads in the factory and federal agencies are not called again.

Snapp believes there should be mandatory training of all jewelry workers who are required to work with such things as degreasers and plating solutions. He also urged strong job protection regulations, clearly enforced, for workers who complain about conditions or refuse to do any job they feel might be hazardous.

But more frequent and "strong" inspections of jewelry plants, Snapp says, do not necessarily result in long-term improvements.

For that, Snapp — who notes his is a biased view — says there should be unions. "I just think, in the end, that's the answer," he said.

Mrs. Orticerio, chief of labor standards, doesn't use the word union. But she insists there is only so much government agencies will be able to do. Her answer: "Collective bargaining."

"Some of the working problems you have can't be solved by OSHA or us. It has to be collective bargaining," she said. "When we go in (a plant), we look for child labor, for minimum wage, for homework. But there are other things in the industry that may be wrong that we are not involved in."

She said chronically low pay, "short weeks" of 30 hours, such things as job protection against layoffs or retaliation for complaining are among those.

"These are things," she said, "that have to be settled by collective bargaining between employees and employers."

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UNIONS have failed the jewelry industry.

Local 18 of the Amalgamated Jewelry Workers Union at one time had 4,000 members in Rhode Island. When the Coro jewelry company closed its doors early last year, the union had fewer than 75 members in Providence.

Over the years, Local 18 failed to win more than a few cents above minimum wage for its members, and benefits never approached those of other industries. The union was also riddled with corruption through the 1950s.

'We're finding hazards and we're correcting hazards.'

The Rhode Island Workers Union, Local 76 of the Service Employees International Union, has been trying to organize the industry for the last five years. The union was ordered instated at Hedison Manufacturing in Lincoln by the National Labor Relations Board, which found the company had engaged in numerous unfair labor practices during the union organizing effort.

The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston upheld that ruling earlier this year, and the company is reportedly talking with the union.

George Nee, president of the union local, said the union would continue its organizing efforts in the state's jewelry firms. He says it will win better conditions and wages not only at firms that are unionized but in other factories as well.

Privately, one jewelry executive concedes Nee is right. Some larger companies, he says, are already improving their benefits and pay to forestall union organizers.

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THE INDUSTRY and its chief association, the Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths of America (MJSA), have not aggressively

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—Journal-Bulletin Photo by WILLIAM L. ROONEY

AMERICAN RING: This East Providence plant, one of the five larger shops visited by the Journal-Bulletin, offers a full benefit plan for its workers, as well as clean facilities.

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pushed for changes. Nor have they policed or sounded alarms in the industry. George R. Frankovich, executive director of the association, said illegal home labor in the industry is almost nonexistent. But as he was saying that, jobshops and factories around the state conceded to the *Journal-Bulletin* that there was widespread use of home workers.

The MJSA does offer and promote group employee benefit plans to the smaller firms and contract shops that make up a good part of its membership in Rhode Island, thus making it easier for shop owners to offer fringe benefits to their workers.

The trade association has also actively publicized to its members new federal and state information on hazards. Frankovich believes it has increased concern about hazards in the industry, particularily among smaller shop owners.

However, in the large question of health, the association killed a study that could have helped thousands of persons.

* * *

FORCES OUTSIDE the industry are forcing change.

A slow economy is hitting the jewelry business.

The official count of jewelry workers is down about 5,000 from two years ago. It has

'I think we're doing the best we can with the resources we have.'
—OSHA director

meant harder times for jewelry workers in the factories, where pay has had to hold the line, except for minimum wage increases.

It has meant that dozens, and maybe more, of the most marginal and poorly operated small factories and shops have gone out of business. Frankovich of the MJSA called it a "shakeout" and said overall it would mean better and stronger jewelry firms.

Shakeouts, however, have happened before, and conditions have not gotten better for most workers.

Environmental concerns may force improvements on the industry.

New environmental regulations take effect in 1983 that will require electroplaters in the state — a big part of the jewelry trade — to clean up their wash water before discharging it. Many shops may not be able to afford major changes in their operations. The marginal shops — some representing the most grim of working conditions — may be forced to close up.

Homework

The part of the industry that so far has not been dented by regulation or the economy is homework. It goes to the rundown second-floor tenement with a view of McCoy Stadium where Doris, 56, and looking much older, cards and links jewelry for a Providence shop for $2 an hour and thanks God she gets the work.

It goes to the city home of a Mount Pleasant High School student feeding work back to a factory for $1.50 an hour.

And it goes to a tiny apartment off Atwells Avenue where a young mother caring for twins gets upset with herself because the fastest she can work her piece rate only pays $1.11 an hour.

This is illegal home labor.

It thrives in the state's jewelry industry, despite one area where a major effort has been by state labor officials to license jewelry contract shops and close ones that were obvious home operations.

None of the offenders was prosecuted in the first round of the struggle, labor officials say.

'You're dealing with people who are afraid to lose their jobs. Just getting them to sign a complaint is a major accomplishment.'

They recommend going after the factories, by checking factory books on contract labor and more closely supervising the shops.

But things are changing rapidly. The U.S. Secretary of Labor — whose agent in Rhode Island was unaware of homework in the jewelry industry as recently as six months ago — has proposed removing homework laws against the textile and jewelry-making industries.

Rhode Island has its own homework law, predating the federal ban.

But the law's status is uncertain.

* * *

LIFE IN jewelry can be as uncertain as that law. For thousands it means low pay and no security. Yet that life can be found everywhere in Rhode Island. It is in the back streets and old factories of Providence and in the suburban industrial parks. It follows workers into their homes, turning kitchens into factories and children into workers.

Jewelry-making began here more than 200 years ago as a skilled and proud craft and has become the refuge of the unskilled and unschooled.

For as many as 30,000 people it has become a way of life.

One of those 30,000 is Nina Carvalho, 61 years old. She has worked jewelry since she was 16. She has been in the big factories and the little shops. "Some are bad," she said. "Some are friendly. I like the friendly."

She has carded jewelry in her kitchen while watching the TV on the counter.

"I did jewelry all my life," she said. For recreation she takes bus trips around New England.

Today she works in a shop owned by her son.

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by RACHEL RITCHIE

FAMILY SHOP: Owner John Masso, right, with wife, Marion, and son, Larry, stand in their shop. In addition to owning the shop, John is a polisher.

Enlightened owners of successful small shop prove a healthy atmosphere is good business

By BRUCE D. BUTTERFIELD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PAWTUCKET — From the outside, Masbro Polishing Co. is just a small job shop tucked away in the back of an old factory building off Route 95.

But inside, it is a brightly lighted, well-ventilated work place for 12 people.

John D. Masso, 55, president, cofounder and one of the company's polishers, doesn't believe conditions in jewelry contract shops in Rhode Island should be anything else.

That's why he and his brother, Philip, tore out the old factory windows along the back of their shop and installed large, sliding glass replacements.

And though it is a small shop with six polishing units, they had engineers design an elaborate circulating system to remove and filter the metal and compound dust generated in the polishing operation.

The system is shaken down every day, its filters changed every two weeks and its blowers cleaned every month, Masso said.

"We're not big. But I try to read as much as I can. Keep up. I don't want anybody breathing dust or anything to give them sinus problems later on," John Masso says. "I had to do it for years myself. It's not good."

* * *

THERE IS no count of the number of small shops like John Masso's in Rhode Island, just as there is no count of the many with poor conditions. But clearly Masbro shows that jewelry making can be done properly in the state — even at the most troubled end of the industry, the smaller shops.

Work at Masso's shop means that employees — half of whom are family members —

'We're here as much as we're home. It should be clean to breathe.'

sit at work benches or polishing heads handling jewelry and compounds that will make their hands grimy. But it does not mean they will have to inhale metal dust from the jewelry or silicone from the polishing compounds.

Some workers will have to dip jewelry in a trichloroethylene degreaser. But they will not have to inhale the fumes of the dangerous chemical because they are instructed to raise the jewelry slowly past coils of cold water that are designed to condense the fumes.

When the shop closes next month for vacations, any employee who has been there a year will not go without two weeks pay. When workers get sick, they will not have to pay their own medical bills.

And when it's a legal holiday, they will not have to take a payless day off.

"I've always paid vacations. The other stuff had to wait. But I paid vacations," Masso said. "I remember what happened to me when the summer layoffs came."

The benefits, for a small shop, are good. The pay, for an experienced polisher, is a modest $5 an hour. New help gets $3.50.

* * *

IN PART, Masso's shop is the way it is now because of thrift and sound business practices. After 19 years in business, he and Philip have enough steady contracts to provide regular work and fair pay for their employees.

John started in the business as a polisher in 1954, learned the trade and, in 1959, opened the shop with his brother.

Three years ago, they saved up enough money to install new windows, lights, a bathroom and a 10-horsepower recirculating system that sucks air strongly from the polishing heads and runs it through a series of filters designed to catch the dust.

"We've had some very good years, but we took the same thing home," said John. "The money went in reserve. We've spent it here (at the shop). We still got reserves left. The idea is, you get good customers and you give them good work. The way I look at it, the costume jewelry business is my business. If they don't sell, we don't polish. So you give them good work."

"You can only be as good as your customers. If you have good contracts and good customers, there's no reason not for you to be a good shop," he said.

But what distinguishes Masbro Polishing from many other polishing and jewelry jobshops in the state is John Masso's concern, expressed immediately, about dust in his shop from polishing and windows that provide fresh air.

Two sons, a wife, a brother and two nephews work in the shop with him. So does

'I don't want anybody breathing dust or anything to give them sinus problems later on.'

an employee who's been with him 15 years, two others who have been there more than five years and a fourth more than two years.

He doesn't want them breathing dust from the metal they polish. Much of it is copper, John said, which contains beryllium. "That can be harmful stuff," he noted.

"We're here as much as we're home," he said. "It should be clean to breathe. All the years I've been in this, I see people working in some dirty shops. They go home with their faces covered in dust. I don't know why they put up with it," he says.

—Journal-Bulletin Photo by RACHEL RITCHIE

DOING IT RIGHT: Masbro Polishing provides its workers with well-lighted and ventilated work spaces. Each polishing wheel has a hood, and is ventilated through an elaborate system to the outside. The ventilation system is regularly cleaned.

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