

The Edlunds of VERMONT

*How Two Vermont Boys have
Put the Name VERMONT
in Every American Kitchen*

by VREST ORTON

Photography by FRALEX

DURING THE WAR, throughout the world, a lot of military men, from the hard working K.P.'s up through all echelons to mess officers who dealt with food and kitchens, found out something about Vermont. It was more than looking at the name *Edlund* on a can opener. They found that this name meant a can opener that worked. For there was not a military installation anywhere that did not have in its kitchen this heavy duty tool made in Burlington, Vermont.

The name *Vermont* and the name *Edlund* became, to tough military kitchen help, synonymous with the words *dependable*, *fool-proof*, and *workable*. Those folks up in Vermont make things that last.

Since the war the name and fame of Edlund of Vermont have spread. Today in millions of home kitchens throughout the land, women link these two names with quality and reliability. For in the last decade the Edlunds have made and distributed nationally a variety of can openers, egg beaters, top-off jar openers and can punches.

This all began back in 1925 in Burlington when H. J. Edlund, the father of the two present partners, designed and started to make, with the aid of his sons and two other men, John Desjardin (now superintendent) and his brother Henry (who is still with the company), a heavy duty commercial can opener for use in hotels, institutions and on ships. Mr. Edlund possessed that old-fashioned native genius for mechanics which once made New England great, and in a comparatively few years the name Edlund was known to hotel men, managers of hospitals and ship stewards. His business reached the point where Edlund openers outsold all other kinds three to one.

After Mr. Edlund's death in 1937, Oscar and Walter took over the business. They are sole owners today.

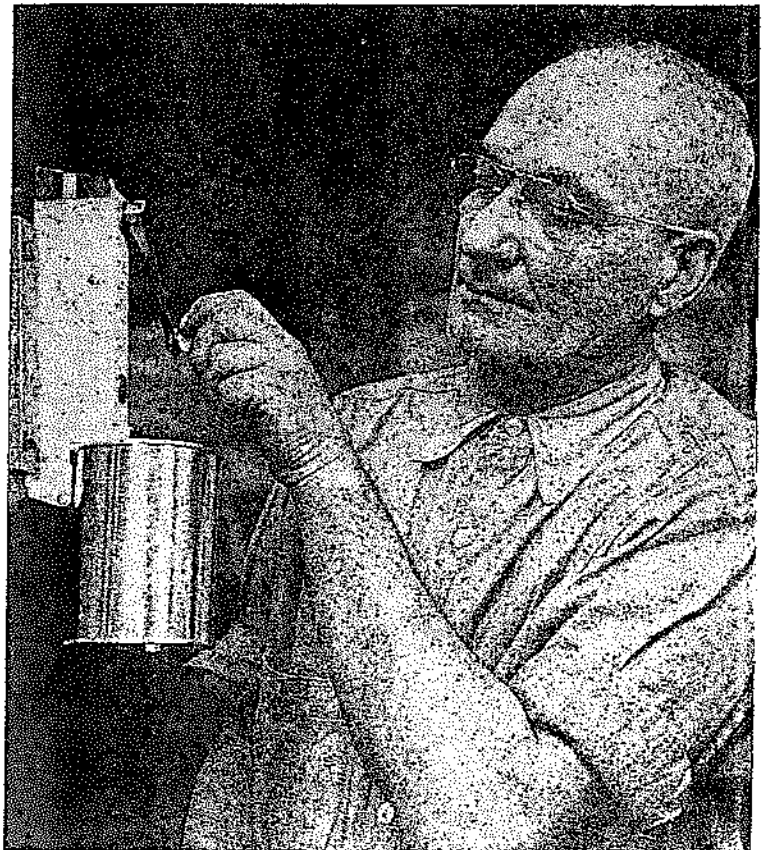
These two young men, typical of our best free enterprisers and ingenious small industrialists, soon began to develop new tools for the home kitchen and to spread the name Edlund around the world. Today with branches in three large American cities and salesmen covering the country, the name Edlund is pre-eminent in this special field. Last year one of their salesmen traveling on a vacation through the wild Yukon Territory in northern Canada, saw in the window of a tiny general store in a remote frontier settlement, prominently displayed, two Edlund egg beaters. It made him feel very much at home.

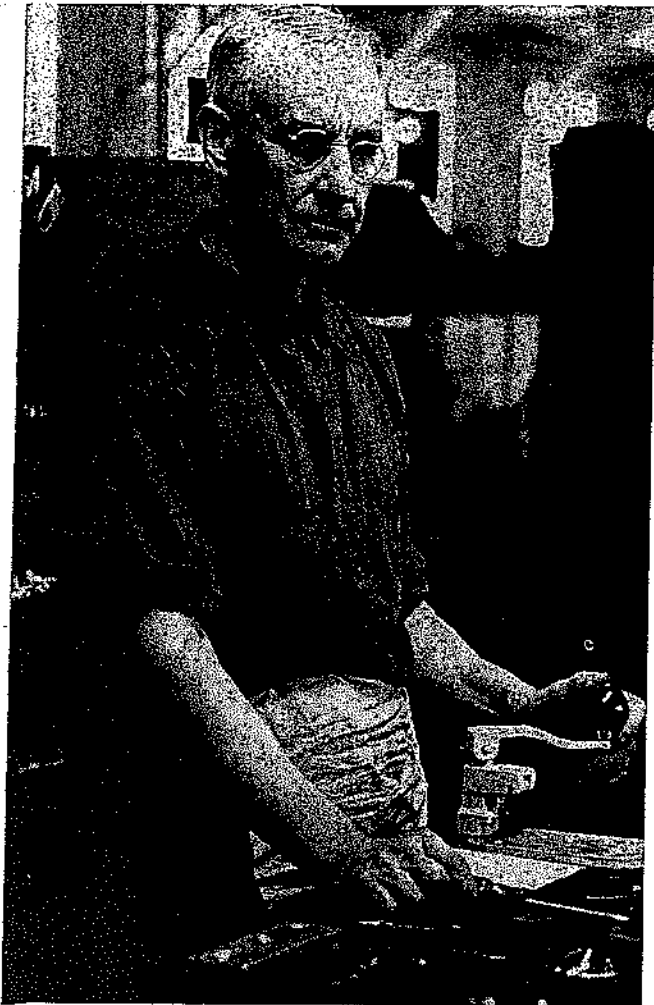
Oscar Edlund was telling me about a trip he once made to New York when he first started selling, and how he got lost. Sent by a steamship company to see if he could sell the steward of a ship docked at the pier, Oscar walked onto the vessel and soon found himself wandering below decks completely lost in the labyrinthine corridors. It took him over an hour to find a human being. This turned out to be a cook in the galley. Undaunted, he started to talk about the Edlund can opener, but found the cook spoke no language he had ever heard before. By sign language he demonstrated the Edlund opener without speaking a word. He sold the order.

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The Edlund boys (as they are still known in Burlington, though both are over 25 years old) and the 50 men who work with them, make up the typical small but efficient and successful industry which the Vermont economic

Henry Desjardins, Edlund's oldest production employee in point of service, makes a can test with one of the company's new household wall openers. Desjardins and his brother began at Edlund in 1925.





LEFT: Edmund Summer is doing the final assembly work on one of the heavy-duty commercial can openers used in hotels and institutions.

climate suits down to a T. Oscar and Walter know every man by his first name and they both emphasize that some of the finest operating ideas have come from the men in the shop. Some of these men have been with the company since their father started it.

The company fabricates its can openers, egg beaters and other products from the raw material . . . cold rolled steel and heavy metal castings. From the basement of the 100-year-old building where they plate the cast bases of the openers, up to the third floor where they assemble the final product and box it, every operation (and this includes heat treating) is accomplished by efficient local help. Under Mr. Frank Reich, who was with the boys' father, they also operate a modern tool room in which dies, gauges, jigs and tools are made to suit their production requirements.

When I first looked at the plant, Sales Manager Bill Foster took me into their museum. Here in a pine panelled room they have gathered samples of hundreds of can openers and egg beaters made by other people. Here they can put on a graphic comparison between their products and the other fellow's. It was by studying hundreds of other openers that the Edlund boys decided that all these devices lacked something . . . and some of them everything. They realized that a woman in the kitchen (this they learned from their wives) wanted a can opener that took up little space, was vertical, hung close to the wall, did not swing out and hit anyone, would open all shapes of cans, would not let the top fall into the can and, finally, would hold the can to the opener.

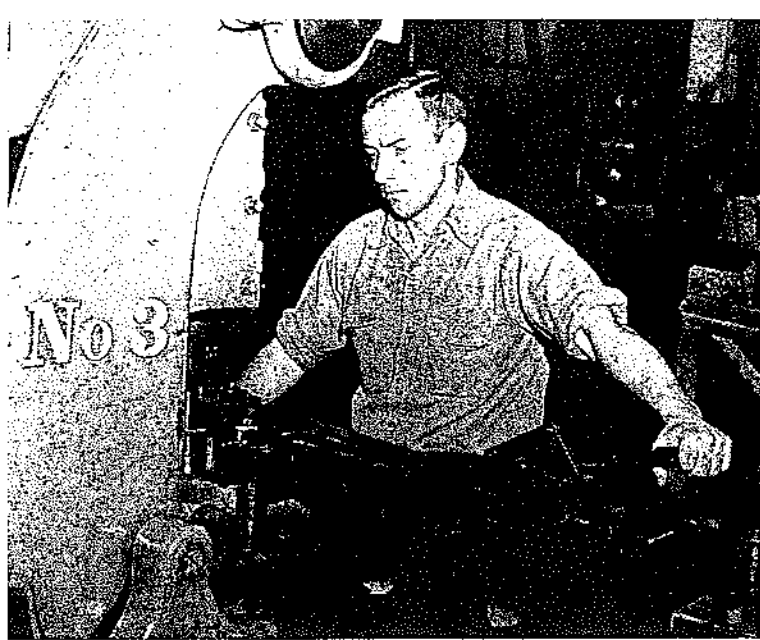
This was a big order . . . nearly perfection. It took them months of trial and error but at last, this year, they came out with a Flat-to-Wall opener which, being built on entirely new principles, does away with all the disadvantages they found on other makes. Great skill and ideas in developing the new opener were contributed by Edlund worker Frank Reich and also by Superintendent Desjardin.



LEFT: Metal opener parts are being removed from a tank for nickel plating by Henry Bouffard.



RIGHT: Author Vrest Orton examines one of the Junior hand openers. Sales Manager Bill Foster explains its design.



ABOVE: Machine operator Vic Bosley operates a large stamping press which forms from cold rolled steel the small parts used in various Edlund openers, egg beaters and knife sharpeners.

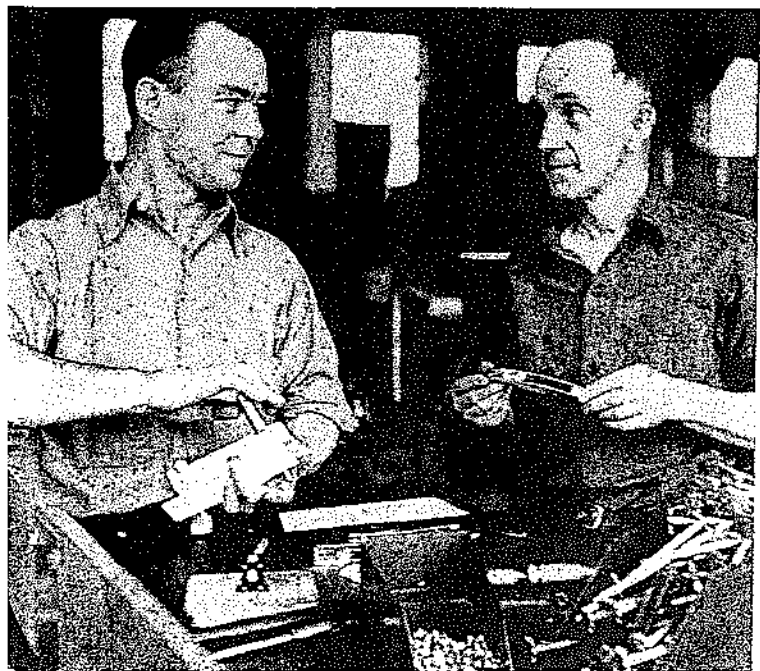
The new Edlund opener was tested, along with all other openers made by 43 manufacturers in this country, by the Can Manufacturers' Institute of New York, which has been testing openers more than four years. The Edlund opener was one of but eight granted the Institute's seal of approval.

This new device will probably spread further afield the name of *Edlund* and the name *Vermont*. They are planning big advertising campaigns in the press and even by television.

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What I like about the Edlund operation . . . in addition to the Edlund boys . . . is that they are not committed, as

BELOW: Art Mercier (left) and Joe Greenwood are performing some of the sub-assembly of can opener parts. Efficient design, precision manufacturing, careful assembly, led to Edlund's success.



are the makers of some other products, to the contemporary philosophy of the economy of waste. From my experience in the last few years with new automobiles, new typewriters and some other contraptions made of metal, I am convinced that some manufacturers have been able, through cunning metallurgical planning, to make products that will, *exactly* so many months, weeks, days and hours later, completely fall apart and have to be junked. This of course (as they figure) is good for American industry, because folks will then have to throw the darned things away and buy brand new.

The Edlund boys of Vermont don't figure that way. By using the finest steel and the most modern methods of testing and fabrication, they aim to make an opener that will last a generation at least. I have one myself we have



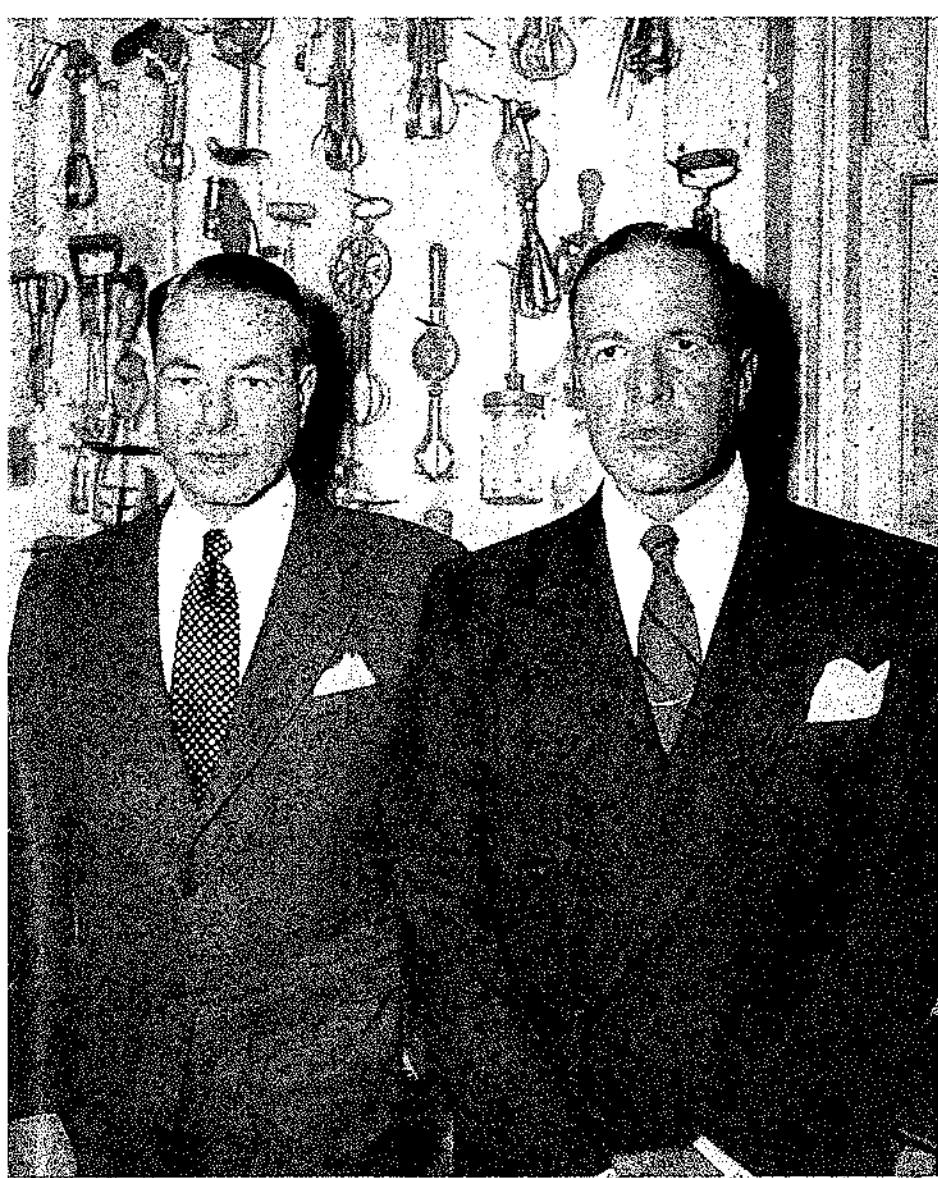
ABOVE: Frank Reich (left), tool room foreman, and Tool Maker Leon Tracy design and fabricate production dies, jigs and tools.

used 15 years, so I am only a few years short of being able to know this is true.

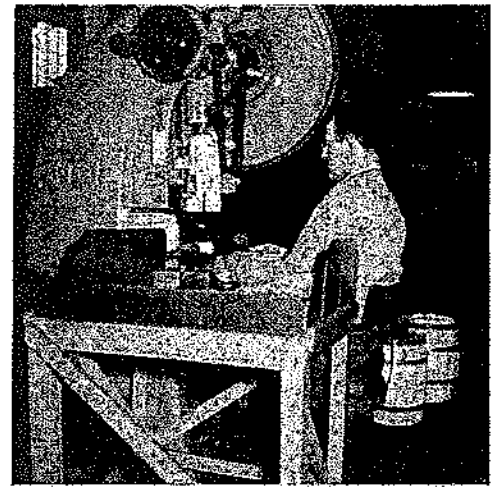
And it's a pretty good thing in my opinion. It goes to show that in Vermont, we believe, because of our rather out-dated notions of integrity and frugality, that things should be made to last.

Most of us have a lot of work to do. We also see that our wives have a lot of work to do. We like and we like them to have good tools that last, and tools that will cope with those daily tasks called chores . . . which Robert Frost so beautifully described once as "work that won't stay done."

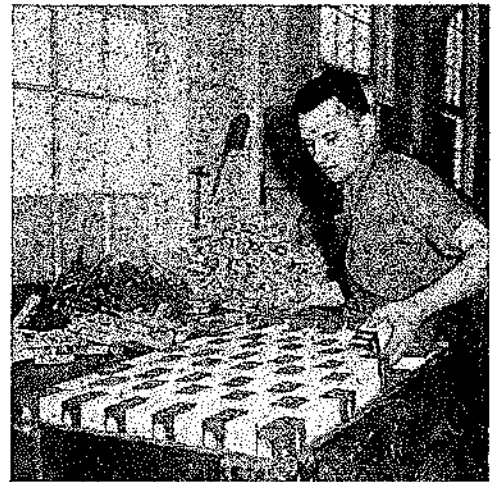
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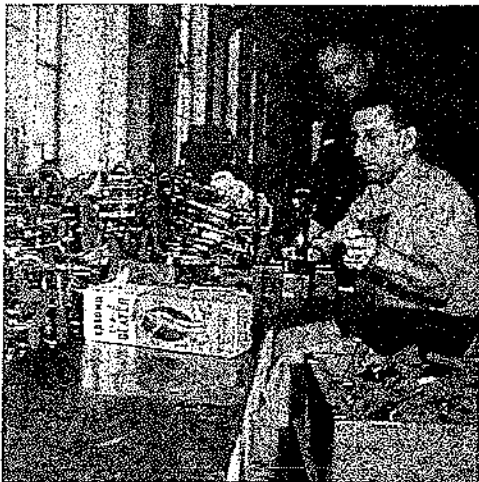
ABOVE: The Edlund brothers, Walter (left) and Oscar, are partners.



ABOVE: Pete Bosley shapes parts on punch press.



ABOVE: Bob Duprey inspects hand can opener.



ABOVE: Adelard Charestu, inspector, and Andy Luchini, checker, (behind) inspect egg beaters.

RIGHT: Superintendent John Desjardins watches Ed Courcy repair small power tool.

