

Watchmaking:

It's one of the vanishing crafts

By C.J. RISAK

It may be a vanishing craft. Michael Vizzini owns one of the smallest shops in Farmington. Located on Grand River next to the Farmington Civic Theater, he has been operating his Watch and Repair shop for the past 20 years. It's a trade Vizzini learned from his father, "who learned it from my uncle," he relates. Vizzini has been working in the business since he was 12 years old. His father opened up the Farmington shop in 1959, and retired two years later, leaving it to Michael.

Since that time, Vizzini has been commuting from Allen Park to Farmington five days a week. He doesn't keep a strict schedule. When it's time for lunch, he simply closes up his shop, leaving a note in the door that states: "For coffee across street at mall." Unlike his father, Vizzini didn't want his children involved in the business. "I wouldn't let them touch my tools," he said. "I don't want them to be watchmakers. 'It's a craft, and today crafts don't pay off.'" Vizzini feels society today is not suited to the special tradesman. The cheap produc-

tion of watches, he says, does not make it worth repairing them.

"IN THE CRAFTS there is no way you can have volume and quality at the same time," he said. "And today's world is all quantity." Is the watchmaking and repairing craft dying? "It's not dying, but it's limited. We live in a world of throw-away items." Vizzini likes working in Farmington, but never really considered moving here. His three children were in school in Allen Park when he first opened the shop, and "now that they're out of school we're stuck there." His two sons are pursuing careers in engineering, with the eldest, Michael, a graduate of Lawrence Institute of Technology, and the younger, Anthony, still attending Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His daughter, Catina (named after Vizzini's father, Catino), is married and has two children. She lives in New Hampshire. Vizzini still enjoys his life. In his small shop (he says it is 12x14 feet, and that may not be far off), he has two drawings of famous concert conductors sketched by his uncle. Two old, large clocks that Vizzini says belonged to his father adorn the back wall, hanging over his workbench. The family watchmaking craft will end when Vizzini retires. He's not unhappy about it, though, and he's not unhappy doing what he's doing. As he puts it: "It's a living."



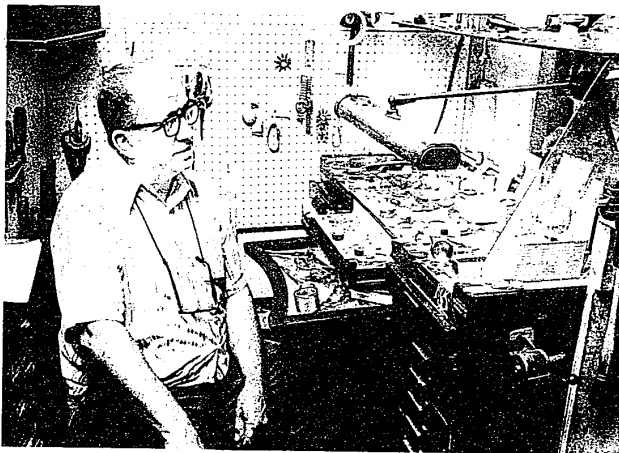
Part of Vizzini's tools include special glasses and a wrench to remove the backs of watches.



Michael Vizzini, watchmaker.



Out to lunch: Vizzini just closes up the shop and heads across the street for coffee, leaving a message (lower left corner) to all his customers.



The watchmaker's workbench, with tools, parts and different repair jobs scattered everywhere.



It's a world of tiny parts and gears, requiring a steady hand and a delicate touch.



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