

ROCHESTER

# Democrat and Chronicle

January 27, 2008

Section: Business

Page: 1E

## Nearly 60 years of getting it right

*Claudia Vargas*

Staff writer

Even though China has had an impact on American manufacturing because of that nation's ability to offer lower prices, one Rochester manufacturer says cheaper prices sometimes mean a cheaper product.

Jim Heil of family-owned Heil Screw Products Inc. said that when his uncle, Edward Heil, started the business in 1939, the company made miniature screws and nuts for original optical frames.

But today, Heil said, most eyewear makers get their frames manufactured and assembled in China, and he is left to make the replacement screws and bolts at his Wright Street plant.

Those replacement parts, though, have given him a 20 percent increase in sales each of the last five years, he said.

"After frames fall apart, they buy the replacement parts from the companies we supply to," Heil said, adding that he sold about 30 million miniature parts in 2007.

Heil Screw Products initially was a subcontractor for Bausch & Lomb. As the business grew, Edward Heil began selling parts to all the optical industries in the area at the time, including Eastman Kodak, Rochester Optical and ArtCraft.

Now, the business has expanded to making parts for other industries, including musical instruments, watches and clocks, and, for a while, body piercers.

"It really depends what the fad is," said Laura Heil, who works at the plant as the accountant.

Jim Heil said eyewear has become popular as an accessory and, as a result, business has remained strong for eyewear screw parts, which account for about 20 percent of the parts sold by Heil.

"Now that it's fashion-driven, people want glasses to match their bags," he said.

Copyright (c) Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. All rights reserved.  
Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.