

# TIMOTHY STARR, GLOVE AND MITT SHOP (can't)

By Jennifer Bell

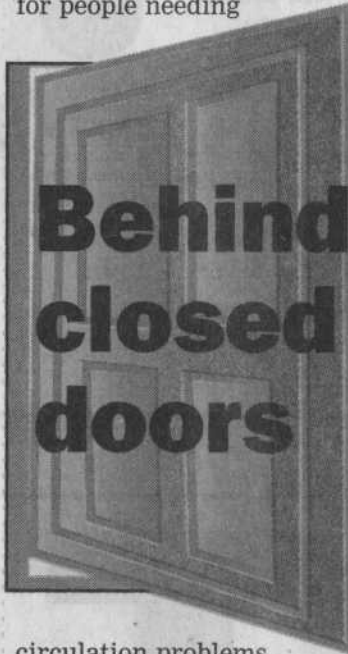
The Intelligencer

Tim Bradshaw and April Nelles have helped people from all across Ontario cope with hand injuries.

Whether it's joints crippled by arthritis, or fingers missing due to an injury, Bradshaw and Nelles — who own Timothy Starr Glove and Mitt Shop in Belleville's west end — can custom-make a pair of gloves that will give the wearer comfort, flexibility and even the capacity to play sports like golf and hockey.

Bradshaw, formerly a shoe designer at Bata, learned the techniques of working with leathers at the plant. When he changed careers, he continued to hone his skills, making gloves as a hobby in his studio.

When a friend, who had recently injured a hand, asked him to make a pair of gloves so he could continue to play hockey, Bradshaw realized a virtually untapped market existed for people needing



customized gloves for damaged hands.

Bradshaw and Nelles began producing gloves in 1991 as a home-based business, then moved to their current location at 497 Dundas St. W. in 1994.

Their clients are people with amputations, burn victims, and those suffering from arthritis or

circulation problems.

And the gloves they make literally help people to live normal lives again.

"It's a matter of self-esteem. People with hand injuries are usually quite self-conscious about their appearance, and the gloves we make for them make their lives easier."

For a client with arthritis, for example, Bradshaw can attach a zipper or pull tabs which allow the wearer to put on and remove the gloves with ease. For a client with sensitive areas due to burns or injury, internal

padding adds comfort and protection.

For someone who's missing fingers, he custom fits the glove to the existing fingers and can reinforce the material to give them a better grip.

He's even made a glove for an individual with a rubber hand.

The correct pair of gloves can even allow an individual to return to work, he said.

Only premium materials are used in the shop, including Capehide, (from sheep), deer-skin, horse and moose hide, as well as sheep shearling for linings.

Bradshaw works with photographs and detailed measurements, which usually include a tracing of the hand to obtain the best possible fit for a glove or mitt.

Whenever he can, he tries to meet the client in person to ensure the proper fit.

But with a customer base that covers most of southeastern Ontario, that isn't always possible.

He and Nelles have driven as far as Toronto to measure clients' hands, however.

"The work we do is very precise, and it's important to get as accurate a measurement as possible, because we usually end up making gloves for that client on a permanent basis," said Bradshaw.

Under Ontario Workers Compensation legislation, people who qualify as having damaged hands receive an allowance for up to three pairs of custom or orthopedic gloves each year, explained Bradshaw.

"Not everyone orders three pairs every year, because they're made to last longer than that."

He and Nelles are kept busy producing approximately 150 pairs per year, however, with the peak season lasting from September to March.

For the discerning client who wants a custom-fitting glove "they can't buy in the stores," Bradshaw can produce a pair in about six weeks, costing between \$120 to \$150.

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