

'We thought layoffs — instead they pulled the plug'



Corby employees, from left: Dick Lawrence, Rick Watt, Gord Male, Helen White and Brian Kelly.

## Shock, disbelief prevail at Corby

By Henry Bury  
and Jennifer Read  
The Intelligencer

The White and Corby families are divorcing.

Three generations of Whites — spanning almost 70 years — have been employed by Corby Distilleries.

Corby's announcement Thursday that it's shutting down Sept. 30 caught Helen White by surprise.

"I feel awful sad about this whole thing. My mother worked here for 33 years, my two daughters worked about three years here between them and I've been here 30 years. I was planning on working another five years and I guess I'll have lots of time to think about my future," White told The Intelligencer Friday.

White, 55, is a group leader

on the bottling line. She was back at her post Friday, as were all other hourly and salaried workers.

(Employees were given Thursday off after the 10 a.m. announcement by company officials that Corby would be moving its to Walkerville next fall, throwing 170 employees out of work.)

The mood among employees Friday was still one of shock and disbelief. Others, however, had a "gut feeling" that a plant shutdown was imminent.

For White, though, the an-



nouncement was a complete surprise.

"We thought employees were being called together to be told of a reduction in production and some possible layoffs. Instead, they pulled the plug," White said.

Stirling's Dick Lawrence has been a line mechanic at Corby for 30 years.

He felt "downright sick" after Thursday's company announcement.

"My initial reaction was shock. It's difficult to just give up 30 years of your life," said 52-year-old Lawrence.

Job layoffs are nothing new to 46-year-old Brian Kelly. He was laid off at General Electric in Trenton and subsequently came to Corby. Nine years later, he's been told he's out of a job — again.

But Kelly's philosophical

about his predicament.

"I'll survive. . . I just lost a job, I didn't die. It's not the end of the world. I've got reasonably good health, a family and certain job skills. And I'm confident something else will come up," he said.

Kelly, a machinist and millwright, Corby, blamed free trade and high alcohol taxes for a drop in sales.

Rick Watt anticipated Thursday's announcement for a long time. "I wasn't shocked about it when it was made."

"Whatever the company offers, I'll take, whether it's helping me go to school or find another job. I feel that if you want work, there is work available out there...but I'll miss the people I've worked with," said Watt, who's been with the distillery for 14 years.

Corby Distilleries closes this weekend ending a run as one of Quinte's oldest and most respected firms. But good memories will remain for a lot of workers and we present this postcard from Bert and Mae Stapley as a salute to the company and its employees.

