

# Distillations

Published for the Seagram Family of Companies

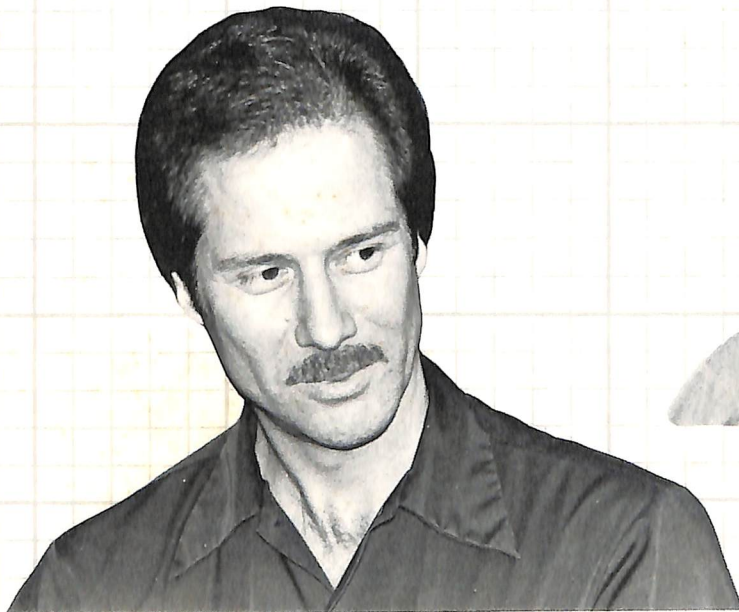
Winter 1983



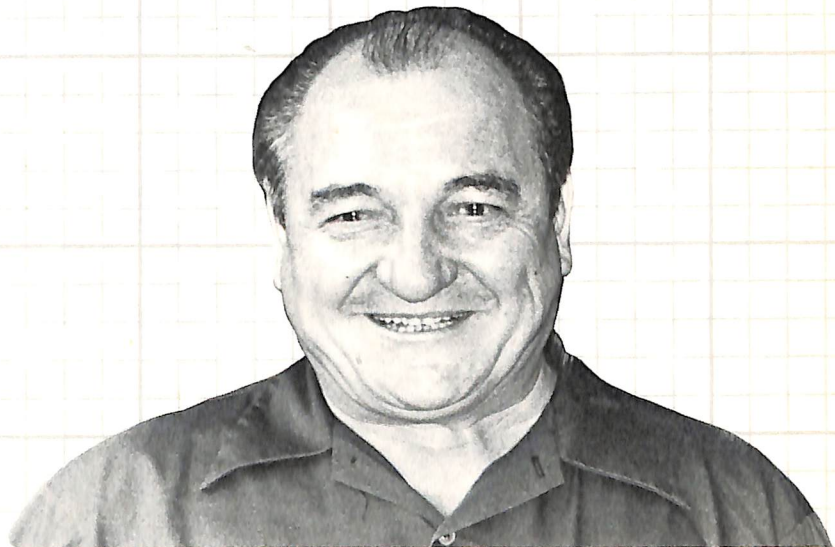
**Don Menard**  
maintenance foreman



**Ruth Ann Rocheleau**  
operator



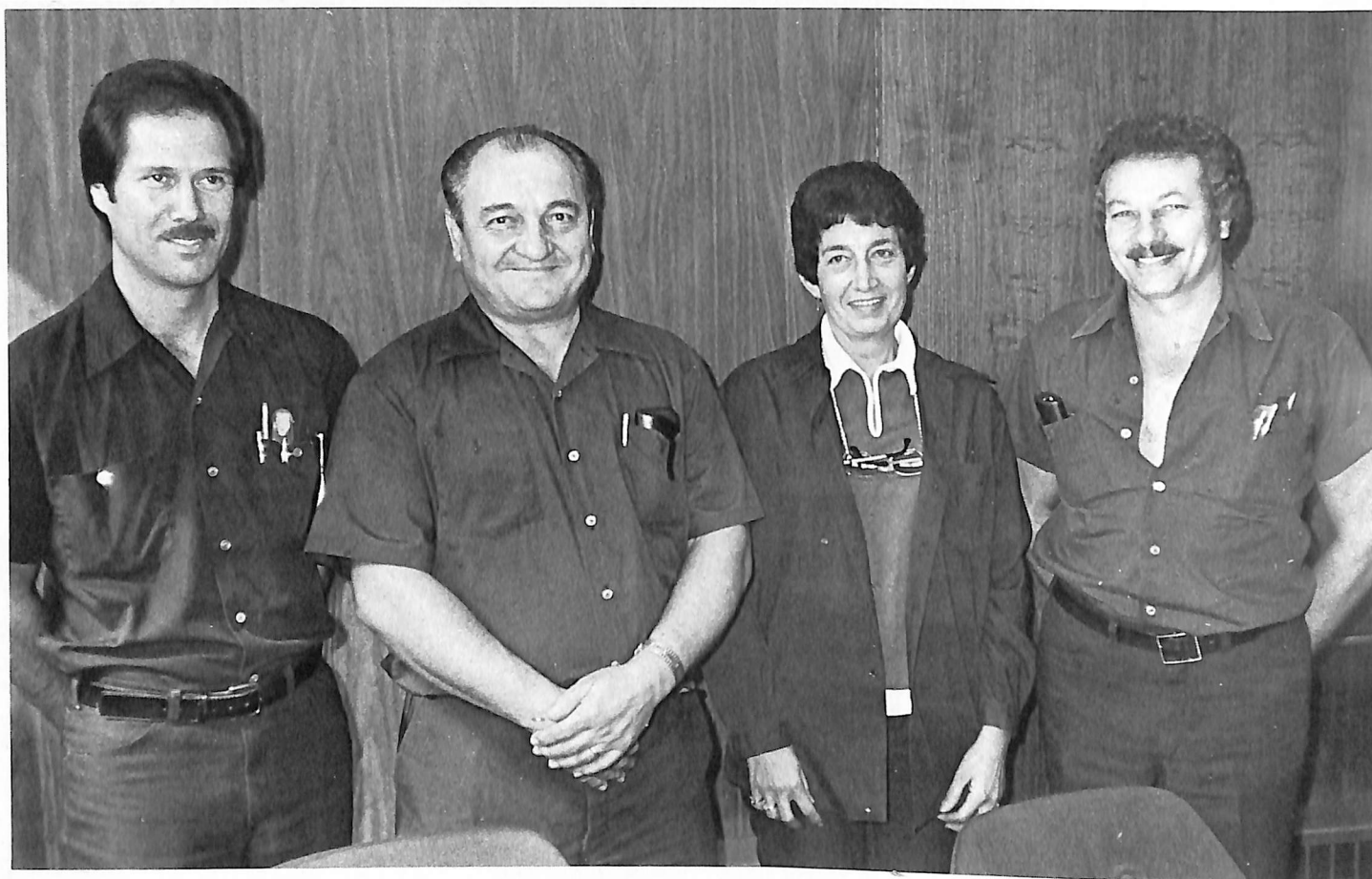
**Paul Pouget**  
mechanic



**Tony Dinunzio**  
operator

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**Taking on tomorrow  
at Amherstburg**

Story page 12



*Masters of the machines: Paul Pouget, Tony Dinunzio, Ruth Ann Rocheleau, Don Menard.*

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# Taking on Tomorrow

*With the help of some amazing machines,  
Amherstburg looks ahead.*

Woosh. Woosh. Woosh. Woosh. Woosh.

We stared, hypnotized, as the bottles dropped into their sacks.

"Incredible, isn't it!" We nodded, unwilling to break the mood with mere words. You have to see it to believe that a machine can really take a Crown Royal bag, open the neck, place a bottle inside, pull the cord closed, then send the bag on its way down the line. "We only installed it last June. This is still the final testing stage," bottling superintendent Bill Baker continued. "The ma-

chine is now bagging about 100 bottles a minute. Eventually it will go much faster." Occasionally there was a goof (a small bug that will probably be eliminated by the time you read this), and a bag didn't open enough for the bottle to drop inside. Operator Tony Dinunzio would retrieve the bottle from a rubber chute where it had fallen. "I'm losing weight with this bending," he grinned. "Well, we'll straighten it out soon enough. A machine like this, it takes a while before everything runs perfectly."

The Crown Royal bagging machine, designed by Ron



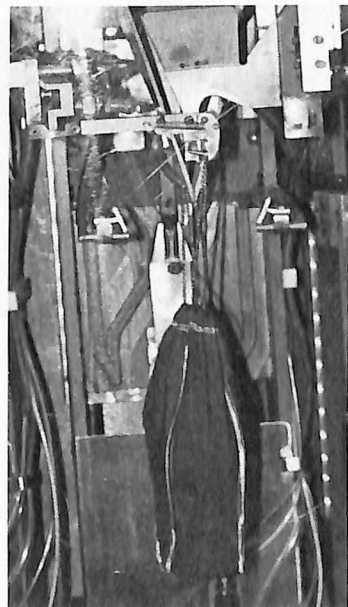
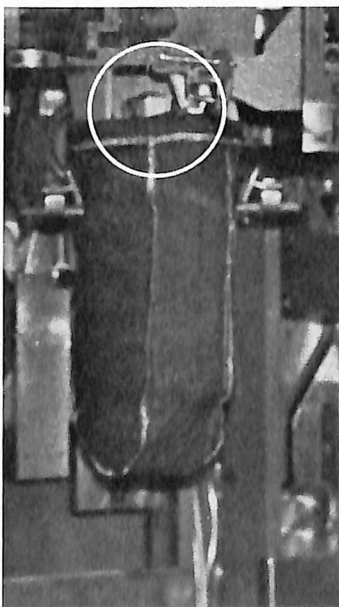
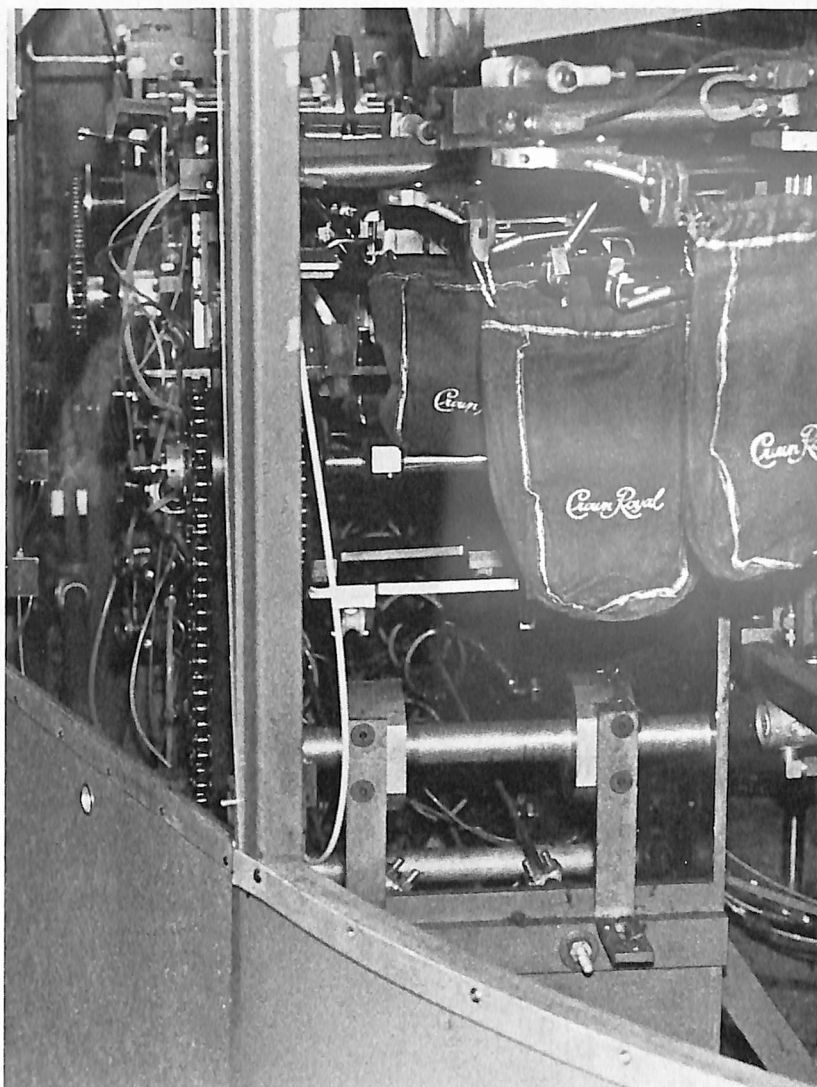
Dault of Bottling Development (see winter 1981 **Distillations**), is indeed, to use Dinunzio's words, "a machine like this." It's unique, one of a kind. Nothing like it anywhere, we are told. But it was just one of the amazing machines we saw at Amherstburg that October morning. We also stopped and marvelled at two uncasers, one single-head, one double-head, also developed by Dault; a case packer; a V.O. ribbon-tying machine and two cartoners. They have all arrived within the last six years.

Why so much new machinery? we asked Baker. Productivity, he answered and then he gave us some background. Amherstburg has a very specialized bottling operation. They bottle two brands only—Seagram's V.O. and Crown Royal—and for one market only, the giant of them all—the U.S. Obviously, to insure its future the plant has to be able to satisfy that market. In 1970, when Amherstburg's present bottle shop opened, it was designed primarily to bottle V.O. At the time, Crown Royal was a much smaller-selling brand (only 30,000 cases were bottled that first year). But soon after, boom! Crown Royal sales in the U.S. began to skyrocket. Shipping figures, 100,000 cases in 1972, more than doubled in two years' time. And Crown Royal hasn't looked back since.

"I was involved in the initial start-up of the equipment," said Baker, who spent three years as line supervisor when the new bottle shop opened. "I remember how impressed we all were with our higher line speeds. And it was an impressive achievement. But then the Crown Royal market took off. Suddenly we looked very slow. We had to increase our productivity in a hurry to keep pace or risk losing what we had gained."

One way to improve productivity is to increase line speeds. Faster lines produce more cases per day. The first of the new-era machines to be installed were the V.O. ribbon tyer and a cartoner for V.O. Christmas packaging, both obtained about six years ago. But Crown Royal, with its deluxe bag and carton, had more than one speed limitation. The installation of an automatic cartoning machine for Crown Royal in 1980 helped that operation. But the problem of the Crown Royal bag took longer to solve. As a manual operation, bagging was holding productivity down on the brand. Although speed went from 55 to 60 and then to 80 bottles a minute, that was pretty well the maximum attainable.

At the suggestion of Bob Brinkman, vice president, Packaging Administration, Ron Dault began working on an automatic bagging machine in 1980. (See page 15 for more on this amazing piece of engineering wizardry.) It took one year to design, a year and a half to construct.



How the Crown Royal bagger works. Top: As each bag enters the grid, it is opened by two sidearms.

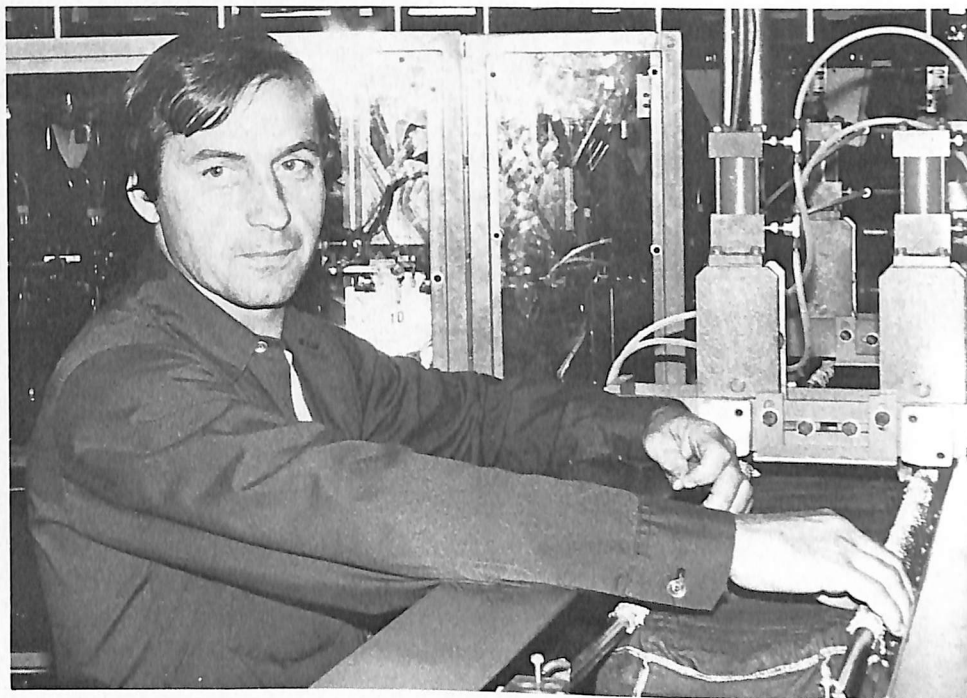
Above left: A bottle drops into the bag from above. Note the bottle cap in the circle.

Above right: As the bag moves on, the sidearms now separate to draw it closed.



The Crown Royal bagger is a triumph not only for Dault and his Research & Development department, but for the whole of Bottling Development. For all the innovative work they have done in the past, this is the first major machine totally conceived, designed and built by them.

Down through history, people have invariably reacted with suspicion and distrust to the arrival of a new machine. This fear is so old, we can take it for granted that the first wheel was greeted with scorn by uncomprehending members of the inventor's community. In the eighteenth century, the industrial revolution terrified people because they saw in it an end to their traditional agricultural way of life, not understanding and perhaps not caring about the long-term benefits machinery would make possible. In our own century, blacksmithing was made obsolete by the automobile, but try telling a



Bottling superintendent Bill Baker.

Left: V.O. ribbon tyer operator Ruth Beaudoin and mechanic Clair Fox.

Above: John McCauley feeding racks of Crown Royal bags into the bagger.

smithy's grandchildren they'd be better off with a horse and buggy. Today in all industries, not only ours, and not only in our Amherstburg plant, there is an understandable fear that machines will gobble up jobs.

Yet, for a company that wants to thrive in the future, fighting mechanization is about as practical as fighting the tide. Says maintenance foreman Don Menard: "At one time people said it was impossible to get a ribbon tyer. A few years later, we had one. They said the same thing about a bagging machine. Now we have that, too. You can't argue with progress. You have to keep up with the times."

Menard was one of the group from the plant that visited Bottling Development in Waterloo last May to have a look at the bagging machine before it was delivered. "We had heard so much about it, we expected it would really be something. When we saw it there it ran beautifully. Then wouldn't you know it, when we got it here it wouldn't co-operate. It took us about two weeks to sort things out."

Machines are certainly not gobbling up mechanics' jobs. In fact, there are more mechanics today at Amherstburg than ever before. One thing a machine can't do is adjust itself, so the more equipment in a shop, the more skilled maintenance people are needed. It's a great opportu-

nity. Paul Pouget was an operator in the bottling room for 15 years. For the past three years he has been an apprentice mechanic. "I like the work very much," he told us. "I learn something every day." A better future? "Yes, I'm sure of it. Every new machine has something to teach you, so in the long run workers are going to acquire new skills. And that has to mean better money."

Mechanics aren't the only ones to benefit. Behind every successful machine there's a successful operator. Like Tony Dinunzio, who moved from the distillery to run the bagging machine. And like Ruth Ann Rocheleau. At one time she was lead hand on line 5. Now she's in charge of the uncasing operation, responsible for ensuring that the equipment operates properly and provides a continual flow of bottles to be filled. Her working day has become more gratifying.

"I find I'm more relaxed. Being a lead hand, I had to be concerned with everyone on the line. Now I can concentrate on my machine."

What sort of relationship can an operator have with a machine? Well, if you're as sensitive to your environment as Rocheleau, you'd be surprised. "Would you believe me if I told you the uncaser is starting to get a personality?" she asked. "I can sense on any given day what sort of



mood it's in. I'm getting to the point now where I know exactly when it's going to act up and how it's going to behave. Don't ask me how, it's just a feeling you get after a while."

Credit where credit is due. Machinery, by its involving nature, reduces the monotony of line work. It also eliminates laborious tasks. Before the uncasers arrived, someone had to manually lift and empty cases of their bottles, a job that was tough going and not particularly well liked. At times, a machine can even be downright humane. We were discussing whether machines can do a better job than people can when Ménard made an in-

teresting point. "If a person sets his mind to doing good work, he's just as good as a machine. But what about the day you don't feel so well? Or the day you're tired? If you have a machine working for you, you really appreciate it."

We sometimes think the world is divided into two types of people: those who are grateful when the electric kettle doesn't conk out, and those who, like the mechanics and operators we met at Amherstburg, get turned on when machinery gets switched on. Being in the former camp ourselves, we were curious as to how it feels to come face-to-face with a new machine.

"It's a bit scary when you first see it," admitted Pouget. "But the feeling doesn't last long. A couple of hours and you're comfortable with it."

"I've trained women who thought they'd like to be operators," Rocheleau said, "but after a few hours they gave up. They were just too afraid of the machine."

"You can get hung up on the cost of it, just thinking how expensive it is and worrying that you'll break it," added Pouget.

"Every machine has its own little ways and tricks," summed up Dinunzio. "You have to be alert to them and let the ma-

## In the bag-at last!

For Ron Dault, the battle is finally over. And after almost three years of total immersion in the Crown Royal bagging machine project, the victory is a sweet one.

"It took over my whole life," he admitted. "I'd work on it all day and wake up in the morning thinking about it. I know it was on my mind all night, as well."

In a way, the bagger was born on a golf course. The idea of automatic bagging had been on Bob Brinkman's mind for a long time. The big problem, he sensed, was tying the knot at the top of the bag, a simple enough operation when done manually, but probably impossible for a machine. The knot was there to keep the bag closed. Without it, the bag would slip down, an unattractive sight for consumers. All sorts of ideas were considered, from plastic clip-ons to sewing on the knot. Then one day while playing golf, Brinkman bent down to tie his shoe and something clicked. He was sure that by looping the cord one extra time inside the bag, just the way he was looping his shoelace, the cord would hold and the bag would stay shut without the need for a knot. Tested, the idea worked.

Crown Royal bags are shipped to Amherstburg on racks, 170 bags per rack. When we first interviewed Dault in the fall of '81, he enthusiastically described how, after long and arduous work, he had developed a hook needle, an idea inspired by the working of a sewing machine, to advance one bag at a time off the rack. Last fall at Amherstburg, he said he had finally



*Plant manager Martin Breshamer (l) and Bottling Development designer Ron Dault talk with Ed Walton (r). As v.p. corporate sales, Walton co-ordinates Crown Royal marketing worldwide outside of North America.*

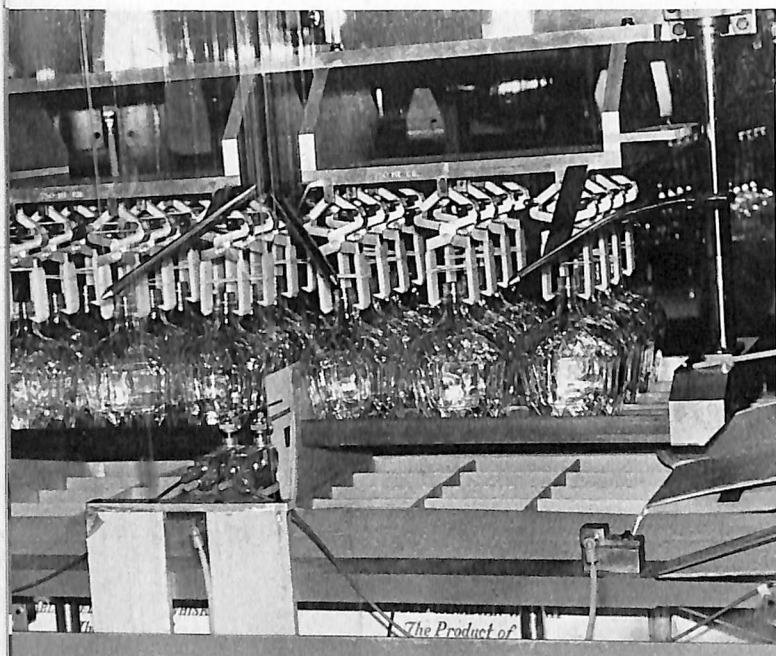
scrapped the idea. "It was a difficult decision to make, because it worked. But it wasn't foolproof. After everything I'd gone through, I had to start over. I designed the new mechanism between two and five o'clock one morning."

The bagger was constructed in pieces. The most difficult or sensitive areas were built first and tested before overall construction began. The machine stands about 32' long and about 5'10" high. When it attains its maximum speed it will bag 150 bags per minute. It requires two operators, one at the infeed, which runs the main machine, and one to feed in the racks of bags.

Although Dault was responsible for conceiving and designing the machine, he

is quick to give credit to the many other wizards of Waterloo at Bottling Development who worked on the project. Two key people he names are John van Gennip and Chris Bettridge. And, at Amherstburg, Bill Baker. "He not only oversaw the setting up of the machine at the plant, I confess to taking advantage of his good nature by venting my frustrations on him. He has been more than helpful."

What was the hardest part of all for Dault? "Starting with nothing but a blank piece of paper. Once I spent months working on an idea only to come to an abrupt, dead end. Back to staring at more blank paper. It was a fascinating but long and difficult assignment. Of course, now that it's over, all the agony seems worth it."



Top left: Crown Royal cases being emptied by the double-head uncaser. Current speed, about 14 cases per minute.

Top right: Crown Royal bottles, neatly bagged, head towards the cartoning machine.

Left: Racks of Crown Royal bags on their way to the bagging machine.

Above: The V.O. ribbon tyer, presently running at around 240 bottles a minute.

chine know who's boss."

The key to that sort of mastery is knowledge, whether it comes easily or takes its own sweet time. At Amherstburg, getting a new machine running and understood is a team effort. Everyone in any way involved participates, from maintenance people and operators to supervisors, management and plant quality control.

Aside from the one-day visit to Bottling Development to see the Crown Royal bagger in action, no one knew much about the machine when it arrived at the plant in June. That was the idea: to get the mechanics familiar with the equipment by learning as they did the installation work. So smoothly did it go that the installation was complete in less than two weeks.

That's even better than it sounds, because the double-head uncaser was being installed at the same time. Once all systems were go, the operating people were taught. The knowledge was passed on to them by the maintenance group, by supervisors and by Ron Dault, who became a permanent visitor at the plant for two months. Mechanics also taught other mechanics, so there will always be sufficient maintenance back-up. Quality control is involved because they're concerned that bottles run through a new machine should come out looking as good or better than they did before the new equipment arrived. Quality controller George Wieme is so familiar with the equipment he was able to describe the workings of each machine we looked at.

Amherstburg is fast getting their

teamwork down to a science. Every new machine is handled with more confidence and greater ease than the last. That should make the plant feel good. In 1982 they shipped in the neighbourhood of 850,000 cases of Crown Royal to the U.S. The forecast for 83/84 is higher still. It's Bill Baker's guess that new machines will continue to arrive. He says, "Improving our productivity is something that can never stop. If we let up, we are really going backwards, because the competition is always gaining. We know for a fact that nobody's doing things the way they did even five years ago."

It all boils down to a simple fact of business life: the more products we sell, the healthier a future our plants will have. At Amherstburg, they're working now to help make that happen.



# THE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

THE MANY WAYS WE ALL HELP

## Amherstburg Cares

For many years United Way's most successful fund drive anywhere in Canada has been its campaign in the Windsor-Essex county of Ontario. A good deal of the credit for this success belongs to our Amherstburg plant.

The generosity and community spirit of our Amherstburg employees are second to none. In 1980 and '81, the plant raised \$14,078 for United Way, a sum that works out to \$72 per employee. With our Company's matching contribution, a total of \$28,156.00 was donated.

Here, presentation of Amherstburg's cheque to Gary McCarthy (r), executive director of United Way Windsor-Essex County, by Joe Beneteau, president U.A.W. local 2098, and Mary Whittal, plant administration secretary.



1. Pierre Fortin presents \$5,000 to Yvon Desrochers of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal to underwrite a Seagram Celebrity Concert.



2

2. Following a Seagram Celebrity Concert by the Hamilton Philharmonic, Bill Kyle (r) turns over a \$5,000 cheque to Molly Beube, president, and Boris Brott, music director and conductor.



3

3. Geoffrey T. Harris, vice president, K-W Symphony Orchestra (l), receives a \$2,000 cheque from Jack Taylor, Seagram Distillers regional manager.



4

4. In Sherbrooke, Que., a \$650 cheque from Real Guérette (l) to Father Daniel Croteau, president, l'Orchestre symphonique de Sherbrooke.



5

5. Suzanne Horne has a \$2,000 donation for André Legault, general manager, Canada World Youth Centre in Montreal.