

Cymbal-Making Secret Held By One Armenian Family For 326 Years

By HAL BOYLE

NEW YORK.—(AP)—The Avedis Zildjian family has held a secret for 326 years.

"We don't tell it to the women," said Zildjian. "The father tells it only to his eldest son, and in time he tells it to his eldest son. In this way we keep the secret."

The secret is how to make cymbals. That doesn't sound like much of a secret—but the cymbal isn't as simple as it sounds. You don't have to age a saxophone. You do a cymbal—it has to be mellowed like a good wine.

These musical noise-makers are as old as the Bible, but the Zildjian family has been manufacturing them only since 1623. It was in that year that the first Avedis Zildjian, a Constantinople alchemist, discovered a secret process for making an ideal cymbal metal from an alloy of tin, copper and silver.

Would-Be Copyists Fail

Through the centuries the family developed almost a world monopoly in the manufacture of cymbals. They still dominate it. "It is easy to analyze the alloy we use," said the current Avedis Zildjian. "But no one can put it together—and some of the biggest metal companies in the country have tried."

Zildjian, a 59-year-old Armenian who came to this country in 1909, has done more than any other single man to make the musical world cymbal-minded.

"When I started, the bands only used one kind of cymbal—a heavy one," he said. "Now we have 171 models in different weights and sizes."

His 12-man factory at Quincy, Mass., now turns out thousands of cymbals yearly. The work is all done by hand, and it takes 5 days to turn the rude metal ingots into sounding brass. They must be hand-hammered from four to six times.

"It isn't easy to hammer cymbals," said Zildjian. "It takes a man at least six years to become skillful."

No Two Sound Alike

The cymbals then are stored in vaults anywhere from six months to 20 years until each reaches its proper resonance. Zildjian now has 40,000 in the process of aging.

"And they have 40,000 different tones," he said. "Find two that

are alike and I'll give you \$1,000—and the cymbals, too. In 45 years in this business I've never heard two that sounded exactly alike."

It is this variance in tone that accounts for the volume of the cymbal business. Professional drummers collect them like postage stamps.

"Harry Edison, the cymbalist for Toscanini, has three chests full—about 200," said Zildjian. "Jazz drummers used to use only one cymbal. Now they use six or seven."

Endurance Varies

Zildjian last year also began to manufacture gongs, and says he is the first man outside China to do so. It took him six months to make the first one. Now he is turning them out in 27 weights and sizes.

How long does a cymbal last? "A hot drummer like Gene Krupa wears out a cymbal in two months," said Zildjian. "In Guy Lombardo's band, which plays softer music, a cymbal is good for at least two years."

"But in the Metropolitan Opera orchestra the cymbalist only goes 'crash, crash, kerplunk' maybe three times a night. His cymbals ought to last forever."

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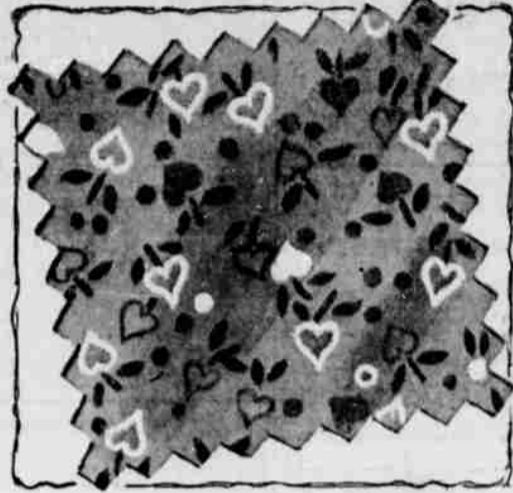
PORTLAND, July 28.—(AP)—Little David Gerard Mahar, who was born July 9 with his intestines outside his abdomen, was reported "doing nicely" today.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Mahar, Gladstone, has survived three operations, which corrected his condition and is now drinking milk and sleeping in a regular crib. For some time he was in an oxygen-equipped crib.

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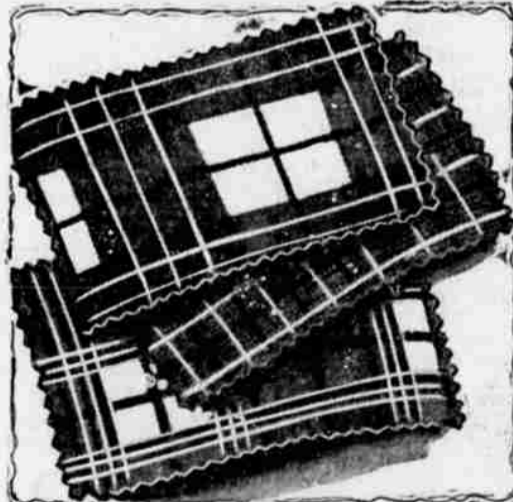
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