

Ink Factory Out Of Red

By HENRY MINARD

LIMA, Peru (UPI) — Reginald "Pinky" Santos, 27, twisted the cap on the 259,200th bottle of ink, sighed and said: "We're not able to keep up with the demand."

A few months ago, the Peruvian government hiked import duties 200 per cent on many items, including writing ink. Local firms representing foreign companies faced the prospect of sharply reduced incomes. Some would probably have to pull out altogether. An old story in several Latin American countries.

Pinky's dad, Richard, had come to Lima from the United States 29 years ago to represent U.S. firms selling perfume, milk, tissue, ink, pens and a variety of other products. He read the news of the higher tariffs sadly and huddled with his sons, Pinky and Cornelius, 28, both graduates of the Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Military Academy.

Dad Santos picked Pinky to find out how the U.S. ink they'd been selling was brewed and then to import the basic ingredients. Cornelius was assigned to go out and solicit business. The father retired to the sidelines.

Today, in the rear of the Santos' downtown office building, there's the craziest maze of vats, rubber tubes, boxes and bottles and labels.

Ink in five colors fills big kegs on a makeshift mezzanine. Each has been blessed by a priest and the kegs are named "Delilah," "Neptune," "Sputnik," "Atlantis," "Tarzan." Hoses snake down to girls who pinch and release, pinch and release the flow as bottles are hand-pushed beneath.

Another girl slaps on labels, still another screws on caps, another boxes, a boy loads, and another truckload is on its way to the provinces. Overseer of the operation is Pinky, a bearded giant more colorful than his name — stained from head to foot.

"We're selling this ink for less than before the new duties," he said, and he and Cornelius want their father to open a modern plant to handle the growing tide of orders, totalling 750,000 two-ounce bottles in one recent week alone. Quart and pint orders run into hundreds of cases.

"Pinky can't keep up with the orders I bring in," complains Cornelius good-naturedly.

Says Richard: "A millionaire American perfume exporter looked in the back office at the ink operation. 'How primitive,' he said. 'You're ages behind the times. True, but it's better than quitting.'"

"Before the increases, I got 10 per cent commission for the ink I sold. Now we pay the United States company 10 per cent of the wholesale price for use of the name. Everyone's benefitted."

"Fewer United States dollars leave Peru but the ink company continues to profit and we have improved the local economy and safeguarded the Santos income."

IT ISN'T THE WHEAT

EAST LANSING, Mich. (UPI) — Homemakers' quiz: What is the cost of wheat in a loaf of bread? Slightly under three cents, or 2.5 cents to be exact, says John Moore, extension specialist at Michigan State University. Biggest expenses in getting bread to market are costs of baking, wholesaling and retailing. In spite of recent increases in the price, of things consumers buy will average from one to two per cent higher in 1959 than they did in 1958, according to agricultural economists at Michigan State University.

Seeing Niagara By Tightrope Has Always Been Popular

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. (UPI) — The deep chasm that forms mighty Niagara Falls and the Whirlpool Rapids has been a challenge to man since the Indians first laid eyes on its majestic beauty.

Through the years, hundreds of daredevils hoping to conquer this natural phenomenon one way or another have been lured to this border city nestled in the north-west corner of New York State facing Canada.

Some died for their efforts; others achieved undying fame.

But the greatest Niagara Falls performer of them all was Jean Francois Gravelet, who, under the name of Emile Blondin, was once the world's greatest tightrope artist.

Just 100 years ago, this slim son of Napoleon's military heroes defied death many times high above the turbulent Niagara and lived to tell every thrilling moment of it. In fact, when he did die, it was quietly, in bed.

Even before coming to Niagara Falls in the spring of 1859, Blondin had long thrilled European crowds with his tricks on the ropes. Feeling keenly Niagara's challenge, he brought along his family and his able manager, Harry Colcord of Chicago, and settled down as a resident of what was then a mere village.

Blondin made his preparations carefully. He even purchased and helped put up the tightrope on which he would perform. Then, on June 30, 1859, he ventured out for the first time on the swaying line stretched between the American and Canadian banks some 100 feet above the Niagara River.

Blondin was the first of many tightrope walkers to try the feat but for sheer courage, he was never duplicated. Performing twice a week before crowds of 25,000 and 30,000 — extremely large for those days — he left his audiences limp with the audacity of his tricks.

The rope, with many guys and a special winch to keep it taut, was installed almost midway between the present Rainbow Bridge and the lower bridges, perhaps a mile below the cataract itself.

Husband-Wife Talk Studied

ITHACA, N.Y. (UPI) — When a man and his wife hold a conversation, what do they usually talk about?

According to a recent study, it all depends on how old they are and how long they have been married.

A doctoral dissertation by a Cornell University graduate student, Samuel Deitcher, furnished these results:

Couples in the first stage of married life—before there are any children—spend more time talking with each other than those married longer. They discuss "subjective subjects" such as personal feelings, sex, religion and their plans, Deitcher said.

Couples in the middle stages — those with at least two children — are not quite so happy about communications between them. Their talks tend to center on family tasks when the children are infants and pre-schoolers. Once the kids grow up, the talk shifts to social and community topics.

The veterans of marriage—those who have been married 25 years or more—find their conversations more satisfying than those in the middle groups but they are not quite as content with their talks as are newlyweds.

The older couples talked least with one another, not quite an hour a day, and usually discussed friends and community activities.

Blondin walked, pranced, ran, turned somersaults, walked backwards, sat down, lay down and negotiated the high wire with baskets on his feet. He even walked across the chasm on stilts.

Blondin, well liked by his neighbors, spent the winter in Niagara Falls and was back at his old tricks the next summer. The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) and former president Millard Fillmore were among those who lined the banks on either side of the river to watch him.

His tricks included holding a hat out at arm's length while John Travis, a local sharpshooter on the "Maid of the Mist" boat below, put a bullet through it. Another feat was to lower a mug on a string to the boat and then, after pulling the mug back up, drink the water out of it.

He also walked across with a wheelbarrow and ate his lunch at midstream, cooking himself an omelet on a small griddle he carried.

Only once did death come close. Blondin offered to carry someone across the chasm on his back. Nobody volunteered and finally his manager, Colcord, agreed.

Gamblers on both sides of the border were wagering the pair never would make it across, and they almost collected. Too much slack in the rope exhausted Blondin. He stopped and asked Colcord to get down.

Colcord had no experience on the high-wire but he obeyed. Slipping down Blondin's back, he grasped the latter's hips and waited. Once Blondin's strength returned, the little manager scrambled back up to his perch on his shoulders and the pair made it to safety.

Colcord often said later that he trembled and broke out in a cold sweat whenever he thought of that harrowing experience.

Many wire-walkers followed Blondin but they were rank amateurs by comparison. Harry Leslie was the first in 1865. Then Signor Ballini arrived, adding zest to his act by jumping into the water from the cable, using a rubber gadget to make sure he landed feet first and remained upright. On the third jump Ballini took a little too long to bob up to the surface again. That was that.

A woman, Maria Spelterini, performed on the high rope in 1876 but hers was a very proper and ladylike act. She made one of her trips with baskets on her feet, one of Blondin's old tricks.

Samuel J. Dixon, who later called himself "Daring Dixon," was an impetuous daredevil. En route from Toronto to a photographers' convention on September 6, 1890, he noticed a rope stretched across the chasm. In a few hours, Dixon was out on the rope putting on a performance right good for an amateur.

Steve Peere was pretty good too, but no Blondin. On a six-inch rope between the lower bridges, Peere performed creditably for several weeks. Then, one morning, searchers found his crushed body on the rocks at the base of the Canadian precipice. The general theory was that Peere, spurred on by several beverages too many, had attempted a crossing in the dead of night and had lost his footing.

Then, there were the daredevils who tried to go over the Canadian, or Horseshoe, cataract in a barrel. Six persons, including one woman, attempted the death-defying plunge and three lived to tell about it.

A plump schoolteacher, Mrs. Anna Edson Taylor, first negotiated the dizzy dive successfully on October 4, 1901. By all rights, she should have died in the poorly-constructed wooden barrel, often described as an improvised egg crate. She was badly punneled but not seriously hurt.

Last to try shooting the falls was William (Red) Hill Jr., a few years ago. He died in the wreckage of his strange contraption of inner tubes at the base of the cataract.

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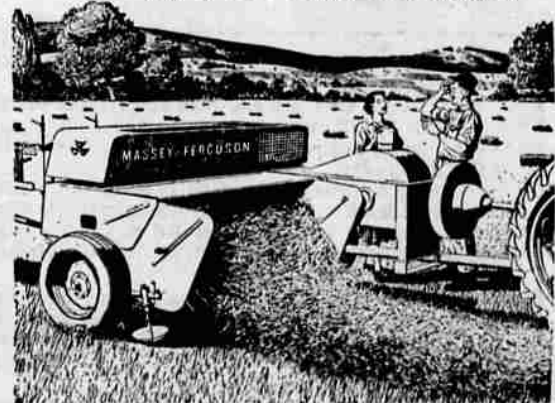
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