

business employing local residents, and the corporate child of **Barbara A. T. Hoff**.

Barbara Ann Terwilliger was born in Ellenville, attended the *Napanoch Elementary School*, and was graduated from the *Ellenville High School* in 1971. She attended SUNY New Paltz, majoring in geology, but taking a jewelry course as an elective changed her life. A part-time job at Piddidy Links became full time, and Barbara was designing jewelry. She became manager and, after eleven years of working for Steve and Elise Pittleman, made the leap to her own business. **Top Shelf Jewelry** was born April 1984, originally in Kerhonkson, but moved to **213 Canal Street** in Ellenville in 1987, to a building owned by Barbara and Gary Hoff.

In 1991, **Top Shelf Jewelry, Inc.** purchased the **O&W Train Station** from *Marvin Millwork, Inc.*, who had owned it as part of their millwork and building products operation since the late 1930s. The building was renovated to adapt it to the jewelry manufacturing business and also provide space for land surveyor Gary's office. The structure is still a work in progress because the Hoff's are respectful of the period of its construction and attempt to retain as much of the depot's character as possible. The



Sale Room (photo above) was originally the Baggage Room of the station and the restoration kept the sliding doors and the original wainscoting. Windows were replaced, but in the same small-pane design. Standing in the Sale Room, a visitor with imagination may picture the bustle caused by the arrival of a train, and even hear the whistle as the train pulled into Ellenville. The Sale Room is open for retail business only four times a year, for a full week each time.

Visiting the Train Station includes the bonus of being shown the 1903 Benchmark in the station's foundation wall.



The tablet is stamped "319 ALBANY 1903," recording that, at that location, Ellenville is 319.318 feet above sea level. Gary shared several sheets of information about this vertical control data that is part of a Geological Survey of the United States Department of the Interior. This Benchmark is a permanent installation, to be used as the basis for determining elevation of bridges and roads.

**Top Shelf** manufactures costume jewelry designed by Barbara, using brass, the least known of the precious metals. She utilizes stampings from Germany, France and the United States, taken from originals as early as 1930. Each item is unique in its design, but is reproduced by skilled



artisans.

In **Top Shelf's** early days, Barbara and her partner, Cheryl Joule, worked alone, but that is no longer the case. Cheryl moved on, and Barbara now directs the work of fifteen employees and continues to be the company's designer. Four salespeople represent **Top Shelf** nationally, selling to contented customers such as the Smithsonian Museum, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Disneyland, Mark Twain Museum, the Titanic Museum, Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, Anthropologie, Art & Artifact, Urban Outfitters, April Cornell, and La Cache.

Almost 80% of **Top Shelf's** designs are purchased by "Mom and Pop" stores, small boutiques throughout the country. Internationally, **Top Shelf** is distributed in Germany, New Zealand, England, Canada, Israel, and Japan.

**Top Shelf** may have an international reputation, but it is very much a family style local business. Barbara's oldest friend, Betty Walsh (photo above, in Sale Room, at right of Barbara), is sales manager and her sister, Susan Piatek, is production manager. The jewelry makers work flexible hours and the atmosphere of the workroom is both welcoming and productive (photo below; next page, top left; inset, next page, of solder-person Joan Sheeley). Barbara is very complimentary about the quality of her employees and their work, and grateful for the support they give her. **Top Shelf** is a happy place with happy, talented people.

Barbara Hoff is especially proud to be an ambassador for Ellenville and the **Shawangunk Mountains** as she travels to trade shows in New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles annually. She's also justifiably proud to share her business scrapbooks, filled with Best Booth and Best of Show awards, clippings and photocopies of **Top Shelf** products in mail order catalogs, movies, and various ad

