

# FOLLOW THE *Signs*



**DEAN BLAZEK'S 70-YEAR SIGN JOURNEY**

**BY MICHAEL BLAZEK**

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Dean Blazek, 2025

# "EVERBRITE"

Golden Drops  
*"GOOD TO THE LAST DROP"*  
BEER

*Point*  
*Special*  
BEER

Malt City  
*"The Finer Flavor Brew"*

Bobbie Ale  
ON TAP

KINGSBURY  
BEER

FITGER'S  
NATURAL  
BEER

BRAUMEISTER  
*MILWAUKEE'S CHOICE*  
BEER

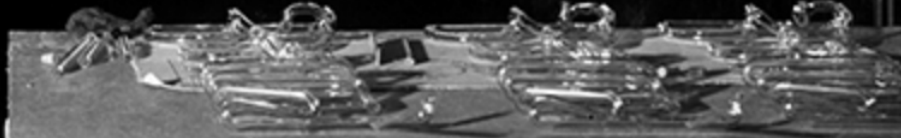
*Joerg's*  
BEER

Crosby Square  
*Authentic Fashions in - MEN'S SHOES*

*Blumer's*  
GOLDEN GLOW BEER

*J*  
B

*Gridley*  
ICE CREAM



WE SERVE  
*Meier's*  
CREAM



L-R Young Dean Blazek and Art Speakerman on a swing stage.

### **Swing Stage: Dean Blazek**

*We started painting a Schlitz billboard at Sixth and Wisconsin that had neon letters, and a twelve-foot high bottle and glass of beer. It had the tag line, "The beer that made Milwaukee famous." It was up three floors above the Avenue Super Bar. We used a swing stage—I had never set foot on one before. It was uncomfortable at first. We started just four or six feet above the roof so I could get used to it. After fifteen minutes I was okay, but I learned that I couldn't move much because the swing stage wasn't called that for nothing.*



*We did many more painting jobs with the swing stage. Schlitz Brewery was Everbrite's best customer at the time and maintained all of Schlitz's signs; some were located at 35th and Viaduct; 12th and the Viaduct; 5th and Juneau and a couple on the north side at the brewery.*

*We replaced lamps and painted many theatre marquees including the Riverside Theater, the Warner, Towne, Wisconsin and Princess Theaters, to name a few.*

*— from an interview with Dean Blazek*

“I was  
saved by  
the O.”



The red X marks the spot where Dean was hanging in a rain storm on a 27-story building.

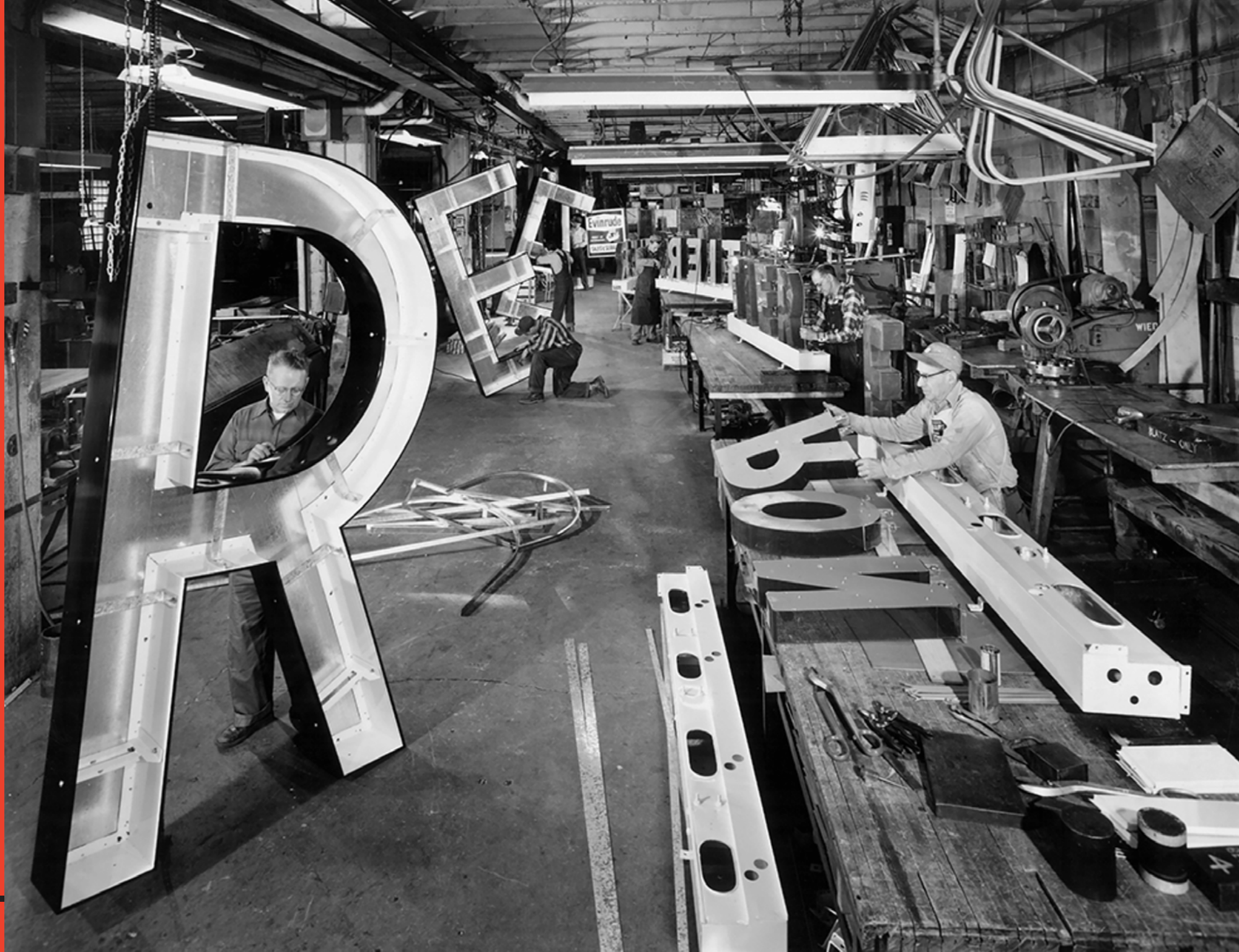
*We never did finish the service call. We went back to work and clocked out and I went home early. I had bad dreams for a week afterwards that would wake me in the night.*

*I learned a valuable lesson that day and I pass it on to any sign people that will listen. Don't service neon signs in wet weather.*

*And I just thank my lucky stars we were working on the letter O and not the H or the T', or I wouldn't have had anything to hold onto when I fell. I was saved by the O.*

*—from an interview with Dean Blazek*

**Author's note:** I have heard my dad tell this story several times but until recently had never seen the photos he had of the Schroeder Hotel sign. In typing up this recollection, I cannot help but ask myself what these two “experienced” sign installers/repairers were doing up on a 27-story building without restraint harnesses. And where was the supervision that might have questioned that working on an electrical sign at heights in a rainstorm was anything other than an absurd proposition. If Dean had not held on for his life, his sign career would have been very short. And my brothers and sisters and I would not be around for him to tell the story.



*While I was at Everbrite my fellow glass-benders were the Hull brothers from Antigo, Ike and Aaron (who went by the name Turk), Bill Patefield, Jr. (who was Harry Hockerman's nephew.) Bill's father, Bill Sr. worked in the sheet metal shop on the first floor.) Other benders I worked with were George Peterson, Mickey Brunke and Carroll Harmon. Carl Wamser, the owner of Everbrite, who had taken over from his founding father, Charley, had two of his sons working on the service trucks.*

*I was working for \$1.29 an hour and after several months I asked for a raise but didn't get it. I started to look around for another job that might pay better.*

*—from an interview with Dean Blazek*

**Author's note:** This trend features heavily in the Wisconsin sign industry, as Dean would find out when he joined the sign association. Many of his fellow board members and company owners had worked with previous generations and had the next generations working with them. And if your dad or uncle worked for a sign company you stood a good chance of getting an interview to be hired.





One of the Everbrite double call service vehicles circa 1950's.