

Instant Printing Business Opens

By DAVID NIVENS
Business Editor

With so many instant print businesses in Asheville, can there be room for one more?

John P. Montcastle and his wife Judy are out to prove there is. They hold the Asheville franchise for Postal Instant Press, or PIP, the largest instant print chain in the country. They opened Sept. 28 at One Battle Square in the Battery Park apartments building after raising the company's red, white and blue colors.

The California-based PIP chain has 619 offices nationwide and is working in seven other North Carolina cities. The Montcastles, an Indiana couple, took the \$27,500 franchise after touring the South looking for a good franchise opportunity. Already in place in competition in Asheville for the Montcastles were two national chains, Big Red Q and Insty-Prints.

The paper explosion pouring from small and medium-sized businesses assures enough work for all the printers, said Montcastle who gets 75 percent of his work from commercial sources.

"We were quite surprised," Montcastle said. "People think Asheville is saturated with printers, but it is not."

Montcastle, a former salesman, said PIP's success rests on preparation and training. Only 1 percent of the franchises have failed, he said.

"We considered McDonald's and other franchises, but thought PIP had the best package," he said.

The package includes equipment and paper stock, management and printing training and continued advice from an area coordinator for which PIP gets a royalty fee from franchisees.

"We are flexible in our working, but we pretty much try to do it the PIP way," Montcastle said. "We know what our break even point is and what profit percentage we make."

Almost everything in the PIP shop bears the company emblem, except the Itek electrostatic platemaker, the se-



— Staff Photo By June Glenn Jr.

John And Judy Montcastle In Their PIP Shop

cret of the instant print business.

The machine photographically makes a paper printing plate for offset printing from an original. The plate can reproduce 8,000 to 10,000 copies. Montcastle learned how to use his equipment in training in California.

PIP founder and president Bill Levine, who started in the printing busi-

ness in his parents' garage during the Depression, first put the Itek to use in his printing business in Los Angeles in the mid 1960s. After his experimentation and perfection of the printing process and company expansion to franchise dealers, PIP now boasts annual gross sales of \$14 million. The company took its name from the Postal Press

print shop LeVine bought. It had specialized in printing penny post cards.

Just as luck had a part to play in the fortune of LeVine's enterprise, it also led the Montcastles to Asheville.

"We were traveling in the South and came to the Parkway and to Asheville," Montcastle recalled. "With the people and the mountains here, we decided it was the place to stay and raise a family."