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Staff photo by Al Paglione

Robert Rich hopes to turn out 500 to 1,000 New York Giants mirrors a day.

Dumont glass engraver looks to take a Giant leap

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Robert Rich of Dumont says his ship's come in — with a Giants helmet clearly etched on its side.

The chances are good that he will be licensed by NFL Properties Inc. to create New York Giants mirrors, and after 17 years of engraving dragons and other designs on the vents, mirrors, and side windows of cars he's now setting his sights on a steadier line of business.

In the past, Rich often earned less than \$10,000 a year engraving as he roamed around the country in a flatbed truck that doubled as an office.

On many occasions, he engraved mirrors in exchange for a tank of gas. In St. Louis, he carved nymphs in a massage parlor mirror. In Virginia Beach, he engraved glass tops of coffee tables. And in Hollywood, he scratched roses and lace into the windows of Zsa Zsa Gabor's Rolls-Royce.

"That's over," Rich, 37, said of his days on the road. "It's over forever. When you're young, you can do it, but I'm not that young anymore."

"Besides," he adds, flipping through a travelogue he keeps in his year-old Dumont store, Crystal Graphic Machine Works, "it gets a little expensive running around the country." The scrapbook is filled with tickets he's received around the country for traffic violations. "I struggled for a long time. It's time to crack down."

Mirrors and panes of glass with floral and animal designs cover the walls of his Dumont store. But Rich said his custom work will take

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a back seat to turning out 500 to 1,000 mirrors a day with the aid of three business partners he's helped train to etch, package, and sell the objects. The wall mirrors will be engraved with the Giants and NFL logos.

After requests in early January for Giants mirrors poured in, Rich sought a license to market mirrors with the Giants and National Football League logos from NFL Properties.

NFL Properties officials say chances are good that he'll get the license.

Rusty Martin, a spokesman for NFL Properties, said about 130 licensees, authorized to use a team's name and logo, make about 350 products for the 28 National League teams. The best selling items, he said, are hats, jerseys, jackets, and sweaters. Mirrors are new to the company.

"We didn't have that particular item in our category," said James Farrell, NFL Properties design director, who is working with Rich on the mirrors' final design.

Farrell said most of his company's licensees are, unlike Rich, "large, established companies."

"He hasn't gone the traditional route," said Farrell. "It would be nice to see a young guy without the marketing background do well."