

**SHOE WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE**

**Bruce Hanley**

*(Interviewer(s): Rachel Desgrosseilliers, Roger Nadeau)*

December 12, 2006

**Rachel Desgrosseilliers:** This is an interview with Bruce Hanley, this morning, for the shoe workers oral history project. It is December 12th, 2006. We're in the Bates Mill complex in Lewiston, Maine. I'm Rachel Desgrosseilliers, who will be conducting the interview. Along with us are Roger Nadeau, who also worked in the shoe industry, and Jessica Dumas, who is our new museum assistant. We'll start, Bruce, by asking you, where did you grow up?

**Bruce Hanley:** I grew up in Lynn, Mass, which was the one time, the shoe city of Massachusetts, and probably the country. The history of that city was pretty, you know, the shoe business was big there, not only the shoe business but the tanning leather was a central too, up until probably the World War II, was pretty much a shoe city. And then GE moved in there and GE was, kind of took over. The shoe workers went into the electri-, well, like aircraft engines, turbines, so GE was a big thing. And at that time, probably just before the World War II, was a, was a shoe capital of, of the, of Massachusetts, and probably the country at one time, okay. My, my father worked at, for United Shoe, my mother, before she got married, was a stitcher for one of the factories in Lynn, my brother worked in the tanning industry, I worked in the tanning industry when I was a kid. And this is something I mentioned earlier, that when I was about four or five years old, my next door neighbor was in the shoe industry, as a supplier, and when I was a little kid I used to go next door and wind, for, three or four years old, wind stripping, and his wife would give me a nice big molasses cookie.

**Roger Nadeau:** What was this stripping used for?

**BH:** Shoes, stripping, you know, binding, binding a, you know, you used to wind it on, on rolls and stuff like that. And when I was a kid I'd wind the, I'd wind the, the binding or stripping. And then, he was still in the bus-, he was an old timer then, old Mr. Peterson, or Patterson, Patterson, I guess his name was Patterson, so he was in the shoe industry probably back at the turn of the century, because he was an old geezer then when I was a young kid. But anyways, that was my first part of, of the shoe business so I started I think young.

**RD:** So where did you go, so then you went to school?

**BH:** Yes, I went to, I went to the University of New Hampshire and the Boston University. But between that time I went to, I was in the service, I went to Korea, and where I was over in Korea was a shoe, shoe section, or a shoe part, you know, when they, they were still, you know, after the war there, they were still manufacturing some shoes there. So I, I didn't do anything with them but I was still involved with shoes I guess, because I was stationed right in the, what they call the shoe area, for Korea. And I came back home, finished school, got my bachelor of science in engineering, and at that time I, while I was at, in school, I worked at, well Falcon Shoe's parent company as a, on maintenance, while I was in college. And my wife was executive secretary to one of the executives at Eagle Shoe, so my history goes back with her, and I could talk with her about different machinery, because she ordered machinery and machinery parts and stuff like -.

**RN:** Your wife, yes?

**BH:** Nancy did, yes. And so I could talk about an Ensign lacing machine, which was called ELR, and she'd know what I was talking about. But, so our history goes way back in the shoe business.

**RD:** So, how did you get to come to Lewiston?

**BH:** Well, Ted, like I said -.

**RD:** *(Unintelligible word)*

**BH:** Yeah, Ted, Ted was at Harvard Business School, and he, he and I, well we were looking for another place. The factory in Massachusetts was having problems, you know, getting people to work, so we were looking around for another area to start another factory. So I, at the time I was working at the, at the factory there in Everett, Massachusetts, where it was called Eagle Shoe at the time, and still was. Then I went from there, we, Eagle Shoe started a small factory, a pilot factory for, a spinoff factory for something different. We were making men's shoes in Massachusetts at that Everett factory, and we wanted to go into boys' and little ch-, what we called little gents' shoes. So I started, I helped start the factory in what we call Raleigh, Mass. It was a small little factory, it originally was what they call a ten, twelve by twelve, but it was one of the first shoe factories in Massachusetts, years, this goes way back to seventeen hundreds, the factory itself, it's still there, and we, we started a factory there for men's, for boys' and gents' shoes, and that's how I started. And that's, we got going there to start a business. I had to hire a salesman.

**RN:** *(Unintelligible word)*

**BH:** And that's, we started selling shoes out of there, hopefully finding someplace. So I, Teddy and I traveled all around the eastern part of this country, from Maine all the way down to, I believe we were down in Carolinas, but we finally ended up here in Lewiston, Maine, because everything was here, workers, supplies, tanneries, the whole shoe business sup-, was right here in Lewiston. So the mill, the *(name)* Mill was available, at that time it was empty, well in fact, when we first moved in we, the mill had, still had textile machinery there. In fact, when we started moving in, they were just moving out

some of the textile machinery. And Bob Roy, got to love him, he was, he was there, had that huge mill, and we were the only people in it. And we started in, well we started in the summer, I believe it was '63, and when it came, when we really started to move in it was, I mean it was cold, and Bob would be standing there, we were in the fourth floor, on the farther wing, furthest wing from where the furnace was, and he was, he would be pumping coal, cold as heck, and all those trucks coming in, and we're the only people in the mill. He was heating, you know, twenty thousand square feet for us. But anyways, I can remember Bob, this might be kind of going off the record here, but I can remember Bob standing on the fourth floor and looking out the window and the dump trucks coming in with coal, soft coal, I mean, these huge trucks, and I'd say, penny for your thoughts, Bob. He says, I wish it was, you could give me a lot more. Because, I mean, tons and tons of coal would be going in there just to heat, you know, our little section of, of the building. But then, we started from there and it went, the rest is I guess history, because we start out with that one little section, eventually we had (*unintelligible word*), we had the sixth floor for a warehouse, we had the fifth floor for a molding department, fourth floor was lasting and stitching, second floor was offices, the third floor, you know, so we had -.

**RN:** And shipping?

**BH:** And shipping was, yeah, that was, at the time it was, the sixth floor was shipping. Remember Al?

**RN:** Right. Al Goddard?

**BH:** Yeah, yeah, so.

**RD:** So the workers, the workforce and whatnot, kind of convinced you, was a major aspect of it?

**BH:** Oh yes, oh gosh, yes, oh we had.

**RD:** What was it about the workforce, was -?

**BH:** Was great, I mean, people here were, let me tell you, I came from a tough workforce, in Massachusetts they were tough, okay? They, I don't know what, just say this enough, very unionized, okay? So you couldn't do anything without calling, you know, a co-committee together. If you wanted to bring in a new machine, you couldn't. That's why, the reason we started the other factory, we could bring in new machinery. We couldn't do it there without starting a, you know, a force of, one guy would have to check, check the machine. If I had, if we had a line of ten, fifteen guys, each guy would have to have so, so many weeks on as a test. Well, there's no way you're going to be tested machine for a year just to, so that's why we started the other factory, and that's why we came up here. The supplies were here, the people were here, the, just about everything was here. Great people, in fact we used to have tests, tests for different parts of the factory for -.

**RN:** New machinery.

**BH:** New machinery, well, so for people coming in we had, you know, it was, back when we first started, was a lot of chances for people to, you know, well at the time it was textile business, well, Continental had closed. This built, Bates was starting, you know -.

**RN:** *(Unintelligible word)*

**BH:** Go down too, so we, we had a, we had a supply of people. At that time too, there was some factories here, shoe factories that were starting to slow down also, but

we had business and we were able to, well we went from just a handful of people, at one time we employed over five hundred, just workers, not salesmen, probably maybe office help and five-fifty, six, close to, over five hundred fifty people at one time, you know, our payroll, so.

**RD:** Can you talk about the makeup of the workforce, as far as, you know, backgrounds, education -?

**BH:** Sure can.

**RD:** What ethnicity they were, what, you know, were they pretty well one, all the same, or did you have -?

**BH:** Let me tell you, that was an eye opener for me. Ninety nine point nine percent of the workers were French, spoke French, every one of my, my superintendent down to every foreman, could speak French. I couldn't, so I had to re -

**RD:** So how did you communicate?

**BH:** Roger.

**RD:** Through the, through management.

**BH:** Right. See, when we first started, that, let me tell you, then most of the people there were, well not, no, not highly educated but they, hand wise, for running machinery, stuff like that, no better place. And they were good workers, they were there every day. One of the things that amazed me too is, is when we first started there were, most everybody could walk to work, most everybody walked to work. They were all from right around here, and that was an amazing thing. I think I had one, one or two foremen that

had cars, the rest walked to work, Bobby walked to work.

**RD:** So you think that most people in, didn't have their homes as much as lived in tenements?

**BH:** No, yes, oh yeah, little Canada, and yeah, oh definitely. Yeah, there was, and then at the very end, you know, when we, most of those people, well you know, Roger, we all had, they all had, look at the Bossies, they, all their kids, you know, college graduates, all sent their kids to school. Ninety nine percent of the, after few years they were pretty well educated, I mean as a (*unintelligible word*), you know, one eighty.

**RN:** Complete turnaround.

**BH:** Complete turnaround is right, yeah. And we started off, like with the computer, we, you know, we went from, you know, the old fashioned sewing machines to highly computerized, we were the first computerized stitching and joining fact-, shoe factory in the world. Not the country, the world. We developed what we call the automatic computer stitches with United Shoe. I sent an engineer down there for probably six, six or seven months, just to work with, at, with United Shoe to work on, on computer stitching. So anyways, you know, that was, that was a big thing with us. We probably spent, well even our injection molding machinery were, you know, state of the art. We, we had to buy stuff out of Europe. In fact, I used to go to Europe, oh, every other year, or every, for machinery shows, just because over here, you know, the shoe business was starting to get smaller and smaller, and most of the machinery's made either in Germany or Italy. And we had exotic machinery, and we had our own mold shop, we made our own molds for, for soles. We had our own, just, we were pretty much self sufficient.

**RD:** What about the workers, did they get along, was there strife?

**BH:** No.

**RD:** You know, (*unintelligible phrase*), yeah.

**BH:** We had, we had a good, we never really had any real problems. Well we, I think we took pretty good care of our people, didn't we, Rog?

**RN:** Hm-hmm.

**BH:** I think so.

**RD:** Did you find that other than working together, did they socialize a little outside, outside of work? We're trying to go the whole, the cultural scene and, you know.

**BH:** We did, yes, we had, yes we, yes, all us, yeah, we used to have some good times, always out to camp or to, we always had big parties, and Christmas parties and stuff like that, yeah, we give, I think we always had good times.

**RD:** Was there a special way of getting special jobs, or did everybody, did the job get put out and anybody could apply, or did you go search out people, or?

**BH:** Oh yeah. Most, most of the time we, from within, but as we started to expand we had to, we had to hire from outside so you did get a lot of, lot of outside people. At the time, well we went from, like I said, almost zero to five hundred, so that's a lot of people. And most, most of, well a lot of our people were right out of high, high school, or even, well, a lot of them came down out of Canada too. We, we used to have a lot, not a lot, at, when we first started, a lot of Canadians, you know, they would come down and, and I was thinking of some of the, some of our, even our foreman, Canadian. Cokie was



Canadian, right?

**RD:** Even in 1963, they'd come down to work in the, the shoe shops?

**BH:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, believe it or not, yeah.

**RD:** That's interesting.

**RN:** *(Unintelligible)*

**BH:** Well yeah, we had, not a lot, but you know, not like back in the '20s or '30s.

**RD:** Right.

**BH:** But we did have Canadians.

**RD:** Did you have, like were there, outside of management, were there certain jobs that was looked down upon, or looked upon as a favorable job, or a better job, or?

**BH:** Well, like anything, yeah, yeah, we had all kinds of jobs, and if, some people, you know, if, they were geared to, to the job so to speak. I mean they might have not had college education, but we, we had, the fact is some, a few of our guys had, look at Roland, he was, I don't think he, he finished high school, look at what he is now. And, and oh, half -.

**RN:** Greg, Greg Campbell, a great example there.

**BH:** Yeah, oh, ninety percent of them, a lot of them had no high school education, or *(unintelligible word)*, and they all ended up pretty darn good, making good money, so.

**RD:** Did the workers feel comfortable offering suggestions, or -?

**BH:** Oh yeah.

**RD:** Being inventive on trying to do things better and so forth, or did they depend on management to tell them?

**BH:** We used to, no, we used to have brainstorming, we'd take a, take a shoe, and depending, mostly the foreman but sometimes, sometimes the workers, we'd just break our shoe down and see, you know, how can we improve this, competitors' or our own. And a lot of times even the workers would say, well can we do it this way? Let's give it a shot, so. No, we, I think we were, but that way.

**RN:** We had a reward program at one time, for suggestions.

**BH:** Yeah, that's right, yeah, I forgot that.

**RN:** You had the (*unintelligible word*) for that.

**RD:** Were the workers, did they find the work hard, or? I went to take pictures with Roger, and there was an eighty or late seventy year old woman there, and I asked her when she started working in the shoe industry and she said, sixteen years old, and she's in her seventies or late seventies and she's still working, and she wouldn't think of -?

**BH:** Jeannine Roy? My goodness, Jeannine, she was, she had to be a teenager when she started.

**RN:** She's still there today.

**BH:** She's still there today, and still one of the better, if I, I don't know, because I -.

**RD:** I was amazed.

**BH:** Some of those girls were great.

**RD:** So, is that the -?

**BH:** When they got married a lot of them left for a while, and then they'd come back. They'd come back after they had the children, they'd get grown up, and so we had a lot of that too. And, and that was amazing things, someone would come back, we've had, one of the things that, couple hap-, it happened at, we would give lessons after, after work, or knock off maybe an hour or so early, and we'd give some of the, that did not have a high school education, so we'd give them, well you ran that, Roger. GEDs, right? I can remember one girl, she decided that, might, you know, after she got her, her diploma, she went to work for some, you know, into an office, I don't think she was gone a month, was she? And she came back, well, couple times this happened, you know, came back. Well, money was better, and it was manufacturing and it was also more comraderie with the, better than the bank, or an office, you know, different, different type of.

**RD:** Did you have anything that you used in the shoe industry that, that had anything to do with the river, or discharging anything in the river, or that you remember of?

**BH:** No.

**RD:** Did you use anything like that?

**BH:** No, we didn't, no, we had no, most of our was internally, steam and everything

was internally, we generated our own. No, I can't remember anything, no, there was no discharge, not to my knowledge, I can't think of anything now. Although we did have chemicals, we did, the shoe industry had chemicals, but we were pretty kosher in that type of thing. We always had inspections, our insurance people were pretty careful with that too, you know. After a fashion, you know, it was probably during our heyday when things like that with the environment was very important. So we, we were, I always considered us pretty, pretty good neighbors, so to speak. No, we never, we never had any problem with the, with the, you know, with the discharge of unfriendly environmental stuff, so no, but we did have chemicals.

**RD:** You mentioned when you first started business, there were other shoe shops. Can you talk a little bit about what the competition was like when you first started? You know, were there a lot of other shoe shops? Were they in Lewiston? Were they in Auburn? Were, and then as you went along, can you talk about how that changed?

**BH:** Well we probably, I think we were survivors, we survived. Some of them didn't, a lot of them didn't, in fact Falcon is the Lone Ranger, so to speak, you know, they're really, and I can, I can (*unintelligible word*), pretty lucky thing. We always found our niche. We started out with little children's, we went to men's, and we developed the u-, what we call the unit sole. We developed the unit sole down in Massachusetts and we brought it up here, and that was, that was kind of unique at the time, especially for children's shoes. We developed what we call PVC, which was polyvinylchloride, which was injected molded, and we had, and we had, oh, we went to urethanes, which was kind of unique, which at the time we were probably one of the first making urethane soles, and again, these, these, this machinery to do that was in the millions of dollars, so, yet, plus the fact, one, you bought a machine, and the machine would be, you know, like this table, each, each place had a mold in it, and the molds could be from ten to thirty thousand dollars apiece, and each sole, each size had to have, you had to have a mold. So very intensive, you know, investment, big investment. I don't know how we

did it, to tell you the truth, but we, we did.

**RD:** So, it was your inventiveness -?

**BH:** Yes, well -.

**RD:** Being able to foresee what was happening, and be in the forefront to carve out your own niche to be, that you, that you survived?

**BH:** I think that's, that's a good point there, because both Ted and I were engineers. He was an engineer and I was an engineer. And ninety nine point nine percent shoe companies were started by salesmen, okay? So we had the manufacturing end of it, I think. We weren't salespeople. In fact, we had a hard time, we'd have a hard time selling the shoe laces, maybe, but anyways, we were one of the first ones to have conveyor lines in like the, you know, shoe industry. And actually we used to have a lot of people from all over the country come to see our places, like Brown Shoe and International Shoe. In fact, I used to, Ted and I traveled all over the place, and that was one of the things, we were always invited to someplace, and we'd give them information, and they'd come to see us and we'd give them information. But it was, we had a good report with the rest of the shoe industry. I think we did anyways. There were a couple places that may not have let us in but, but we, those people were always, we figured they were, we were ahead of them. No, that, and it's, I think that's one of the reasons, the place is still going. It's, it's still, my son is over there now and he's an engineer, and I guess we tend to engineer the, the business. The business was basically engineered, not, wasn't, like I said, it wasn't sales oriented, it was engineered. So we were able to make them, and we would find our own niche, and hit that. Like I said, we went from little boys to big boys, little boys, what we called little gents, and we went to boots or, you know, work shoes, and work boots and safety shoes, and now they're even making, they're, I think they're one of the few places in the country that will

make leather firemen's boots. They're not rubber, they're leather and, back when, it was one of the last things I was working on when I, when I left, was developing with the tanneries, right here locally, in the state of Maine, helping, working with them to make fireproof leather. And we did develop it, and that's what they're using right now over there. It's one of the few places in the country. I think it's the only place, to tell you the truth.

**RD:** Good. What about, do you have a feel for like how the family was organized? I mean, was there an order in the family? Was there like an overall general, you know -?

**BH:** Amongst the workers?

**RD:** Amongst the workers and their, and their own families?

**BH:** We had a lot of, lot of wife, husband, ki-, children.

**RD:** Teams?

**BH:** No, no, no.

**RD:** That, that came into work?

**BH:** That worked for us, quite a few. I'd like to, it's a good, that would be a good thing to, to investigate, how many families we had working for us.

**RN:** I would say right now, off the top of my head, that we had at least fifteen husband and wife teams doing, when I say teams I mean them being a team, but they did separate jobs. You know, one worked in the stitching, the other one in cutting, you know, lasting, and so forth. But we had that many.

**BH:** Yeah, yeah.

**RN:** Husband and wife.

**RD:** Who was the boss in the family?

**BH:** I'm going to take the Fifth on that.

**RD:** Well, we find that in the textile industry it seems like -.

**BH:** Was the woman?

**RD:** The woman was the one that handled the affairs of the family, and the husband most, you know, most of the time, she's the one who took care of the, the household and paying the bills, the husband would come in and give the paycheck.

**BH:** I hate to tell you, I think that's what happened in my family. No, I would say it was, I, I think it was even-Stephen. I wouldn't, though the women were usually the dominant, they, they could be the dominant ones.

**RD:** Can you speak a little bit about the community itself in general, when you first started versus how it changed, you know?

**BH:** Very, very much, I would say -.

**RD:** Can you?

**BH:** Can I? It was very, well like I say, it was oriented that the, the families and the

church, and definitely it was a French, and now I think as it, as it got, well near my end, my end of my term, I would say that things changed. I don't know how much, but at the first of it, it was definitely, you know, family oriented, revolved around the community, it was a very close. Like I said, they, a lot of them didn't even have automobiles, and so it was here with, within the community, the clubs. In fact the first, where I, when, the first year or so when Ted and I first started, we spent time here right across the street, there was (*unintelligible word*) and also at the restaurant there.

**RN:** Cedar Street Lunch.

**BH:** Cedar Street Lunch. In fact, I forget the fellow's name that was the cook there. We, we'd be working late at night, and maybe just before they closed Teddy and I would run over there and we'd get all the leftovers. He'd just fill our plates up, so we could, we could eat once a day, and that was it. But who the heck?

**NR:** Nell.

**BH:** Nell and, and who was the other, who was the other cook there? He was a great guy too. But anyways, we always had a very close relationship with everybody. I got along with everybody here. I think I did anyway. I know we did, we, it was a good time, (*unintelligible phrase*), and we had, I can think of some of the people that we, that were, that were peripheral to our industry, like the patent people, like Bobby, you know.

**NR:** Caron.

**BH:** Bobby Caron, god love him, gee whiz, you know. Bobby and, and some of the other people that we had, well the Verreault brothers. I mean we were, we worked very close with them, the Verreaults, with, at Diamond Machine. They were, they would come in to us. Well, in fact we had one of their first conveyors. All the new conveyors,



that we had were always developed by them. In fact, stuff is still over there today that they developed, and you know, worked great with Bob and Roger and Dick, great people, best. I mean, that was one of the things too, we had super help from those people. They would come in, I mean we'd be there at late, late at night, and those guys would be here, we would be working, trying to figure out stuff out, how to make this work. And, and as a result, a lot of stuff that they developed with us would be found in other parts of the country. A lot of, a lot of things that we had developed over here, they pushed off, you know, they were able to sell it in other parts of the country. You know, that, the Verreault boys were super duper. Well, at the Jones and Vining people, they, we worked with them quite a bit, and a lot of, a lot of local people that were here, we had, we always worked pretty good with them. And I think that's one of the things for us, was how successful we were, these people helped us a lot. They, they went out of their way for us, you know, we, in that respect it was, I think of now, gee whiz, some of the people are great, I can, I can see Bob, Bob and Roger Verreault, I mean we'd be there at midnight, working in the factory, you know, and they'd be there, you know, giving us ideas. Roger writing down stuff, Bob smoking his cigar.

**RD:** So what happened then? You talk about, when you decided to let go, or did you decide to sell the, or did you decide to retire, or did you -?

**BH:** Yeah, well I kind of, things, well I guess we, the business was going overseas, a lot of it, so you had to kind of make a niche. And one of the, one of the people that were, were, the (*name*) people had an in with the, like General Motors, Kodak. They had what they call these trucks and vans that went to these businesses. In other words, if it was a, like a General Motors or a Ford plant or something, they'd bring their trucks right in, and that's when we started making safety shoes, so they had an in there, which no way in the world we, you know, you could ever, you know, Iron Age was a good size outfit, and so we were continually giving, you know, making shoes for them. And finally we got to a point where they said, you know, we need more. Well, that meant you had

to upgrade, and we just decided, gee, you know, it's a big, big, big decision, so they said, we're going to find somebody else or unless you sell. So that's what we did.

**RD:** Sold?

**BH:** So we sold to them and they, they were good, they were good to us. They, I mean they, they kept us supplied and, and as a result, you know, they really, they were able to put stuff, these, and we were able to develop new products for them, and as a result, you know, as things escalated, the costs of doing business escalated too. I mean a lot more than when we first started. You know, you couldn't get away with a little, you know, ten dollar sewing machine. Our sewing machines would cost us eighty five, fifty thousand, you know, dollars, I mean big bucks. And then you, if you wanted to, to upgrade your sewing machines, those were in the million. So you had to have some backing and it was not a, not an easy task at the time. Especially with the, we, when we were making children's shoes, in one year we went from seven, seven hundred dozen, I forget now, dozen a day, and then the, the Chinese or, you know, the Koreans came in, so it made a big difference in the, zippo. (So that's when we switched over to, we, again, it was one of our treks over to Europe, and at that time the Germans were doing big things with what they call urethane, and so that's when we started getting into urethane for men's boots. And we took over Dunham, Dunham Boot and, which was a, you know, a, we made for LL Bean, we had some of the best, you know, companies in America. We were very fortunate.)

**RD:** So foreign competition did have some major effect on the shoe industry?

**BH:** Oh, def-, it, oh, oh yeah, it killed our children's business. I mean we went from, you know, seven hundred dozen, seventy dozen, seven hundred dozen a day or something like that, I forget now, but we went from that, our next year was almost nil. I mean that's how fast. And you take your big companies at the time, you take the big

companies, they all went overseas. Sears, WalMart, any of those, well one of our biggest was Morse, Morse Shoe, they went. I mean we'd, we'd fill the bottom of the, of the, of the warehouse there in, at the Continental Mills before, before Easter, for children's, and then maybe in the next year, zero. I mean that's just how bad it went, it went from. The only reason it saved us, we were able to jump up and, and find that niche in the men's market, so, and we were able to, we also, we had mold shop, we had the mold shop up in the sixth floor of the Continental Mills and they were able to, you know, push stuff for us, which we could design a new sole, and because they were integrated with us we could get it, whereas if you had to go outside, and a lot of ti-, and then a lot of, lot of that mold making was going overseas, so you, you had to get in back of, you know, some of the big guys. So we had, that was one thing we had, we had our own mold shop, so we were able to put new styles in like that. So that was a big, that was a plus.

**RD:** Good. Is there anything else that you can think of that we haven't covered?

**BH:** Probably.

**RD:** That you can think of, that sticks out, was there some major event or happening or?

**BH:** Well, I think probably the computer stitching, which enabled us to do some things with, that nobody else could do. And the only reason we, we were able to do that is, is we had, we had an engineer down at United Shoe for probably six or eight months solid. He stayed down there and worked with, with them, and would come back to us, and we'd work it out, and as a result, they became United Shoe. That was one of their biggest lines, was their computer stitchers. Probably between the computer stitchers and the, and the, and the injection molding department, we probably had the knowledge, best knowledge in the, in the country, probably the world at the time. There

was not too many people we couldn't beat, you know, if we got the, we got a go ahead, and we got some orders, we'd, we'd put it in. A lot of times we took some chances, and I think that's why we were successful, in that respect. We would take a chance. But we did have, like I said, we did have good help, we had the, the supplies were all here at the time. Of course today it's a different story, but you know, a lot of stuff has gone overseas.)

**NR:** You talk about having good help. Do you remember some of the benefits of the programs that you offered to your employees that you (*unintelligible word*) on?

**BH:** Yeah, well when we, yeah, yeah, that was, of course I was up in the State House so I got involved with some of the stuff that, but especially health insurance. When we first started, we offered health insurance completely paid. We offered insurance, life insurance, that was all paid. And we had a few little benefits that, you know, always gave them a bonus and stuff like that but I, and I think we paid them pretty good, we paid our people pretty good. Things, as the government got more involved with us, one of the biggest things was the workman's comp. Workman's comp went from a few thousand dollars, well not a few thousand, it was back in maybe the late '60s, not too bad. I mean it was, you could afford it. And then all of a sudden, it goes to twenty, fifty, sixty, a quarter of a million dollars for insurance, it's some-, you know, unreasonable. Whereas we used to fight for five and ten cents to save on a shoe that would come through, and you know, you'd pay for your insurance, it would cost you, you know, ten times that or more. Then the government got involved. One of my biggest problems was, with the government was, and especially the state government, was OSHA. They had different, I would go out west to big companies like Brown Shoe and some of the big companies out there that, you know, they'd ask me, Bruce. I would say, gee, you know, you know, you're OSHA, you get fined for this? And they'd look at me cross eyed for heaven sakes and they'd say, what are you talking about? So even though they were national laws, they would interpret it different here in this state, and as a result it

would cost you more money. I can remember, this probably isn't even worth talking about, but I can remember -.

**RD:** It's important.

**BH:** I can remember, of course Continental was an old mill, right? And I'll never forget, the nurse come in, and she decided that the doors to the women's stalls were too high. So I had to, I was supposed to change all those, and if not you got fined, and we had just put all brand new lighting in, and we had our electrician come in, from OSHA, said, you have to put another wire in. It was things like that, I mean it was unreal, some stuff was unreal, that I considered unreal. But it was, it was an expensive proposition to do business. It still is a, this state is an expensive state to do business in. It really is.

**RD:** Good.

**BH:** But one of the things, yeah, I guess insurance was always a headache that you had to, you know, it would hit you when you least expected it, and you're trying to make, you know, trying to compete with the rest of the world and the state -.

**RD:** Made it hard.

**BH:** Made it hard, yeah.

**RD:** Good. Well, I think we've had a, we've had a good interview. It gives us a little insight, and we'll put it with the others and go from there.

**BH:** Okay.

**RD:** We really appreciate your time coming down.

**BH:** Thank you so much for inviting me.

**RD:** We'll go from there.

*End of Interview*

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leather foot, and you have a fancy collar, let's say calfskin, or whatever. Now, they don't stretch the same, so if you're making a size eight shoe, the size eight die is, it's too big for the type of leather that you are using and it stretches too much. So you tell them, well cut it a size seven or cut it a size six, so when you last it on the nape, it fits nice and tight. If you don't do that, you can make it look real pretty. I can make it look like the greatest pair of shoes in the world. You buy a size eight, and two days later, it will be a size ten. You'll be able to keep it off your feet, because it's going to stretch that bad. So you have to develop the cutting instructions, so you can say okay, the vamp is an eight, cut it size six, the collars are an eight, but it doesn't stretch at all, so cut that a ten, and the plug is a size eight, cut it a size seven. And it can get very complicated to come out with a shoe that is, if you buy an eight, it's going to stay an eight and it's going to be pretty and fast to manufacture. The better the shoe fits, the faster you can sew it.

Hand sewing is a very physically demanding job. I don't know, I think, hardly any hand sewers that haven't through their careers gone through torn chest muscles, carpal tunnel syndrome, arthritis in their elbows and their wrists, things like that. Repetitive movement, it can take basically a hundred eighty, two hundred stitches to do a size ten men's, one shoe, that's four hundred stitches a pair. If you take a guy that's been sewing thirty pairs a day for thirty years, you never realize how many times he's repeated that one motion, millions, so eventually it works on him, it really does work on him. Some guys, you could call them men of steel, I believe, because they did it and they made it look like there was no effort to it at all, and others, it was just downright hard work. For me, it hurt every day and I loved it. I wouldn't do anything else.

I miss the sounds, the smell, the people. And for it to bite the dust here is really sad, because we have the capabilities of taking it back if we want to, but we don't. It's the global market, or I don't know why we don't want it back, but probably the big thing is the kids don't want to work anymore. It's just the only thing I can figure. They all want to use the computer. So pretty soon, there used to be (*unintelligible word*) hand sewers, there's no more hand sewers, because there's going to be more plumbers and electricians. The kids want to work stuff like that.

**AL:** We are at the end of the tape.

**BC:** Cool.

**AL:** So I think we'll stop here for today.

**BC:** Good, because I haven't been to Japan, and I haven't been to Australia, and I haven't been to a lot of places, where I really don't know how to mix this up, because -.

*End of Interview*

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