

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

Dana Pride
(*Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu*)

SWOH #028
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Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Shoe Workers Oral History Project at Museum L-A. The date is May 28th, 2009. Today I'm interviewing Dana Pride, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Dana, would you start by giving me your full name, and spelling it?

DP: I am Dana Eugene Pride. D-A-N-A, Eugene, E-U-G-E-N-E, Pride, P-R-I-D-E.

AL: When and where were you born?

DP: I was born in St. Mary's Hospital, Lewiston, Maine, 1970, July 13th.

AL: Did you grow up in Lewiston?

DP: I did. Lewiston and Sabbattus, which is the same thing, to me.

AL: So you spent time in Lewiston.

DP: Well, I lived there my first nine years, and then when I was seventeen, I lived in Sabbattus, and then I moved back to Lewiston. I probably lived in Lewiston half my life. But I've had a house ten, twelve years, in Sabbattus. But I still consider Lewiston and Auburn my town, because I know where everything is.

AL: Growing up in this area, during the seventies and eighties, what was it like, in terms of social activities.

DP: My social activities, well, I lived on High Street in Lewiston, which, if you know now, is all the hospital, Central Maine. In front of us we had the hospital, and behind us we had the railroad tracks. That was our two playing grounds. We played, and the security guard used to kick us out of the hospital parking lot, and the railroad people used to kick us out of the railroad. But there was a whole group of kids that lived on that one side of the street. Right before, when I was four, they tore down, there used to be both sides, apartments, and they tore down, what would be the right hand side by the hospital, down. They left the left hand side apartments and houses. That's where all my long friends come from. I've known them since I was four, five years old.

AL: I know from talking to you earlier that you had many family members working in the shoe industry in the area, and I'm wondering if you can go back and talk about the earliest, sort of chronologically, and then move forward with the different members of your family. What shops did they work in, and what did they do?

DP: My father, my uncle, and my brother. My father is the oldest, so I'll go with him.

AL: And what's his name?

DP: His name is David Pride, Eugene Pride, that's where I got the Eugene from. He cursed me with the same thing. He started, I believe him and my uncle both started at this place called the Belmont, where they had a bunch of, there was a lot of sewers. I don't know exactly how many there was. There was hundreds of them at the time, and they used to sew in three pair lots. That's actually I think where they both, this would be the mid '60s, early '60s, that they started down there. That's where they both trained to be hand sewers. Back in those days they didn't last very long in one shop. They would go from boom, boom. They didn't like what they were getting paid here, they'd just pick up their jacket and their tools and they would go somewhere else, because there used to be, you know, they called, fly-by-nighters, shoeshop. They would get a small run of shoes and they'd say, they'd entice them, say, we'll pay a little better for this over here, and they'd go over here. But eventually that one would close down, and the big ones would stay around. I think the next one that was big was, Quaddy Moc, which was, Dave Rancourt was the foreman over there, who then started the later ones, down the line where I started.

So, my father and my uncle both started at the Belmont, and I think they went to different places. I know my uncle worked at Quoddy, and he worked at Downeast Casual, and he worked at Maine Shoe, and Allen Edmond. I just known him longer, because my father got ill later on, and he couldn't hand sew as much anymore. But he did that for fifteen years, till he had rheumatoid arthritis, and it was too tough on his hands, so he couldn't do it, because it's piece work, you know. Now my brother, who's three and a half years older than I am, he started at a place called Down East Casual, which would be about '84, because he was eighteen when he started. He worked at several different places as well. Worked at Billings Shoe, he worked at Downeast, Maine Moc, Allen Edmond, even in West Sebago, down in Westbrook. My uncle worked down there too. I basically worked, I didn't leave the town, so I didn't want to go that far. Then, there was me, I was seventeen, and Dave Rancourt knew my uncle pretty well. My uncle is probably one of the top five hand sewers in the state.

AL: And what was his name?

DP: His name was Jeff Pride. He talked to Dave, and Dave got me in to start sewing. I worked my, I had to lie actually, at first, because I had to say I was eighteen years old, and I worked in the making room for two weeks before they wanted to see, you know,

so they gave me a big bad job as they could, you know. I remember I was making three dollars and whatever, fifteen cents an hour at the time, minimum wage was. So I did that for a couple of weeks, and then they started to train me in hand sewing. I can't remember the guy's name who started it. Matter of fact, I still got my first shoe. When you do something, they give you your first shoe. They like to bring it back later on, and say, hey, what is this. That's your first shoe.

AL: So, some of the time you worked, your uncle was still working.

DP: Oh yeah. I was, at one point I was actually his boss, because I was at Allen Edmond for a year and a half, I was the foreman of the hand sewing department. He just recently retired, one and a half, two years ago. That's all he did, his, it's a life, which is funny, with my uncle, this is a funny story. I always found it funny. In his early years, he started at the Belmont, and you had to make a certain rate, a certain amount of pieces, so you'd get paid for it. He did it for a year and a half, two years, and they said, you're not going to make it, you're not going to make it, because he was more worried about going out to the strip at the time and drinking beer and doing things like that. And until they said, oh, we're going to fire you because you're not making quota, he didn't really push himself. He didn't really care. Then he finally realized he had to push himself a little bit, and he realized he could actually make pretty good money. That was always the story between my father and my uncle, because my father, in the beginning, made a lot more money than he did. My father was a good sewer, but just above average. And my uncle could do almost twice as much as an average sewer at one point. So in the '70s he was making, he was bringing home four hundred dollars a week, which was pretty good money at the time. My father was selling, we lived on Bates Street at first, then moved to High Street, his rent was seven dollars a week, and it went up to eleven dollars. He thought that was outrageous. So, it was pretty good money, considering what rent was.

AL: Talk about the hand sewers as a position in the shoe shops. I mean, they really had a lot of advantages.

DP: The hand sewers were the prima donas of the hand sewing shop. We got whatever we want. Management kind of resented us a little bit, because we had control of what we did. We got away with a lot more than any of the other people in the shop, and they catered to us. When I came in, it was '87, it was the end of the hand sewing glory. It was probably seven or eight years of glory years, when I came in. You could come in when you wanted to, you could leave when you wanted to. If you came in at nine o'clock in the morning, they didn't say, why are you late, or, what are you doing. They were, hey, how are you doing. Then you could leave at twelve o'clock and say, see ya later, and they'd say, oh, come back tomorrow.

My brother, when he first started, he just turned twenty-one, so he was going through

his (*unintelligible*) stage, and Dave Rancourt, this is always one of my favorite stories, says to him, we used to work four, nine hour days, and a four hour day on Friday. That would give us our forty hours. He said to him, give me four good days. Give me Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, you can have Friday and Saturday, Sunday off. That didn't work too well. He was living with me at the time, so I was paying the rent, so he didn't really care. So then he tells him, give him three good days. Give him Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, you can take Monday and Friday off. That didn't work out too well either. Then, eventually, he says, give me twenty good hours. There was a time he would just work two days. He could work two days, make as much money as the rest of his friends were making, working all week long. And once again, I was paying his rent.

So we could do what we wanted to. What would happen was, and they knew, the hand sewer was the weakest link in the chain. You could only make as much shoes as the hand sewers made. You couldn't make any more than that. So, if you didn't cater to them and try to keep them along, then you always took away your maximum production. They always said they could find someone else to do other things that they could do, but with hand sewing, one out of ten people who try to hand sew, will actually be able to do it. So you just couldn't take, they would take people that had been in the shoe shop, twenty, twenty five years, and say, I'm going to train you how to hand sew. And they could do all these other jobs, but they'd go over there, and they couldn't do it. So, they had the leverage over them. We used to yell and scream, we'd talk all the time, we had a good old time. It's always lots of fun. If you haven't hand sewed with somebody, you know someone who has. You know, you get the six degrees of separation. This is one degree of separation. They say, blah, blah, blah guys. Oh, I don't know him. Someone you know knows that guy, because there's not that many of them. We got paid the most. We whined the most too, because we considered ourselves, special.

AL: Can you talk about the art of hand sewing? What separated somebody from being able to do it, and not being able to do it? What separated people from being really good at it, to being average?

DP: Hand sewing shoes is an art, not a science. You can say, do this, do this, and do this, and know exactly what you have to do. But it's kind of, you got to, it's got to be in you. And I've noticed too that families, like mine, and other ones that are in it too, that have brothers and sisters, they would all seem to catch it or something. It was like a genetical, you know, here you go, you know how to sew. I couldn't tell you what couldn't make someone do it. I picked it up faster than most people. I was like, in a month, I was sewing twenty-four pairs of shoes, which is what a hand sewer who's been doing it for fifteen, twenty years, could do it. I realized that I was making minimum wage, and if I made more shoes, I made more money. So that was my drive. You've got to realize too that a lot of hand sewers used to work through every one of their breaks. They would work five minutes into lunch, and five minutes past lunch. You had

to be self driven to, you'd race other people, and you would race yourself. And the key to being a good hand sewer and an average hand sewer, one was drive, but the other thing was to eliminate mistakes.

When you hand sew shoes, there's little things you can do, they call them little hitches. You can watch one person, and you'll see them moving very quickly, but they're not being very productive. They do more movements than they have to. If you took someone like my uncle, he looked like he was the slowest guy in there, but there was no wasted movement. The second, you would use an awl, the second he put his awl out, he put his needles in, and he'd just pull it out. And then you'd have other people who would double push their needles, and then pull twice. It's hard to explain, but it was smoothness, and eliminating different hitches in the way that you sew, without killing yourself. I injured myself when I was twenty five, twenty six years old, my shoulder. I had tendinitis. For a year I couldn't move my arm. You think you're constantly pulling. Let's say you do a hundred stitches on a pair of shoes, which it could be more. And you'd do twenty, that's twenty-four hundred times a day, pulling with your might to gather the shoes. You got baseball pitchers, they limit them to one hundred pitches in a game, every five days. And now you're doing it five days a week, ten thousand times, because a lot of hand sewers would, I think almost every hand sewer had tendinitis, or carpal tunnel. I used to wake up, and for the first hour I couldn't feel my hands, until you shoved one of them needles under there, and then you'd wake up.

I couldn't tell you why some people, I think drive is a big one. You've got to be able to push yourself. Always race yourself all the time. It's not like if you get paid by the hour, where you're just, you know, the clock is your enemy, because it goes by so slow. When you're sewing shoes, you look at the clock and you say, oh, it went by that fast. You're always trying, almost every hand sewer I know, I don't think there is one, always has a clock right there that they have to look at, because they're always timing themselves, and they're always trying to pick up time within what they're doing. Well of course you have to make the shoe good too. There were some people they would call butchers who would just, it didn't matter what they would do, they would just punch eighteen million holes in them, and just try to slap the, eventually the company would get rid of them, because they were making, not very good shoes. I couldn't tell you why, what makes one good and not good. I would say drive and (*unintelligible*).

AL: Did your family members teach you? Did you pick things up before you actually went into the shop to train?

DP: Not really. There was always, you would go to my father's house, they always talk shop all the time. The biggest thing is, if you punch your clock yet, because they would come home and say, yeah, these shoes over here, they were tight, or big, or they had a different overcast on them. So it was always being in discussion all the time. My uncle's son, which was my cousin, was the only one that never hand sewed, and he

always hated that. But his father never wanted him to get into hand sewing, because it was one of those things, once you got in, it was hard to get out of it. He could see, he was younger than me, he could see it slowly demising. That's what they slowly did to hand sewing, when the shops went away and they couldn't now go over to different hand sewing jobs. And there was more hand sewers than there was jobs. That's when they started, they said, oh, you had the upper hand over us, now we have it over you. They used to say, where are you going to go if you don't come here. It started from, you could leave when you want, to right now, they want you to punch in six minutes before to six minutes later, after the thing. It's not like it was.

The foreman used to go over to the bar to get the, he'd be, come on, come on back, there's lots of shoes. There was always seven, eight people in there. The Ritz Café, or whatever it was, come on back and sew some shoes. Now if they get caught drinking a beer on Thursday, there's one beer, they get in trouble. But no one really, it's one of those things, they show you little hints as you're doing it, but it's hard to explain. They'll watch you do something, and say, oh, you shouldn't do that. It's better to train them earlier, because once you catch, you start a hitch, it's hard to break yourself of it, because you're so used to doing it. I went in the service for three years, then I came back, and I started hand sewing again. I broke all the things, that three years off made me, when I came back here I had to relearn. You knew how to do it, it was like a bike, but you could then relearn it so you didn't have that hitch that you were trying to stop. I couldn't do it while I was sewing because I would always catch myself double tapping tacks, or pushing two needles in the (*unintelligible*). Little things that, well, I watch them.

When I was young I got moved right behind my uncle. We had different benches that went along. He'd be flapping his gums, smoking cigarettes, talking to other people. I'd be going as fast as I can, sweat pouring off me, and he'd still beat me every time. And it looked like he was going so slow. But he would be, you lose this, you take this, you know, there's different ways everybody sets up shoes and does things. They showed me little things, but it's got to be in you.

AL: When did you start to see the industry getting a lot smaller? You left, eventually. Was it because the shop you worked at closed and you were laid off?

DP: The one that I, mine's probably a little bit different than most, but it's still open right now, but there's only a couple sewers still left in it. That's Allen Edmond. At one point there I was the boss, and I would see, as middle management, that the upper management, because we became more corporate, they were always squeezing, trying to get, they would add more things on to people to do without adding more money on piece work. So people were still making the same amount of money now, as they did fifteen years ago, because they never got a raise. And then it got very frustrating to me, because they would add new styles, with more elaborate stitching to it, and they would, the rule used to be, you'd get ten cents for every overcast. That was thirty years ago. And then thirty years later they were still wanting to give you ten cents for this overcast.

And the plugs used to be, which is the top of the shoe, used to be a lot shorter. Then they made the plugs a lot longer, so you had to do more work into it. And they realized, and I think a lot of it had to do, I think the prima dona days, and the resentfulness that we had that little bit of power, and then when the shoe turned on the other foot, that came back on, they kept saying, oh, where you going to go. You been doing this, you know, my uncle, and all this, twenty-five, a lot of these people were in there doing it thirty years. It's the only thing they know how to do. And they made a good living for most of their lives, doing it.

So they said, what are you going to do. So, I left because, after I got off being foreman, I said, I'm just going to go back to the bench and sell my shoes. But I knew information on them now, because I went to all their meetings and I saw all these things, and as you can tell by my interview, that I'll talk. So eventually they laid me off, which was the best thing that happened to me because, I then got TRA, I got the whole Allen Edmond TRA, which means, if you get laid off, because they were starting to send things to the Dominican, that you could go to school for two years. So that's how, now I work in a laboratory in a hospital. That's how I got that, from there, because I got laid off. Work started lowing down. They were sending work to the Dominican Republic. I actually got called before, when I was, somebody wanted me to go to Pakistan to teach in Lahore, people how to sew shoes. They would give them fifty cents, or twenty-five cents to sew these shoes, what they're giving five to seven dollars a pair for these hand sewers. So it's all, the shoe industry is slowly declining. I bet you they have twenty-five sewers left that are still doing it, considering there was, at one point I heard there was five thousand sewers that were in this region. This used to be the hand sewers' capital. The best sewers are still in Maine, though. Always have been. They have other ones in Massachusetts and Minnesota, but Maine was always the best. Maybe I'm a bit biased, but I'm sticking to it.

AL: Did hand sewers, or shoe workers in general, did they socialize together a lot?

DP: Oh yeah, you knew almost everybody in there. It usually was at the bar. They had little dive bars that were all along these little mills, and you knew all the people in there. We used to play jokes on each other. That was the fun of it. One of my favorite jokes would be when a new guy would come in, and it would be Christmas time, and I'd tell him, did you sign up for your turkey yet, like at Thanksgiving. And they would go in there, they'd go in the office and they ask, oh, I'm here to sign up for my turkey, or ham. Christmas time it was ham. Of course the people in the office would be going, huh, what are you talking about. But what was good about it was when they'd come out, they wouldn't come out and go, they would play along, so we could send the next guy in there. And they'd go, yeah, I just signed up for my turkey. And then they would go over there.

Most hand sewers would just sit there and talk with each other across the room or

across the isle, and they'd have different functions. That was like your family away from family. Most of the time you're working, that's more than half your life anyway, that these people are. Like I said, if you don't know this one person, someone else knows that person. A lot of them used to drink. It used to be a key thing for shoe workers, drinking. But even in the marking room, it wasn't as much, but you knew all the people in there. If they worked in there two, three, four years, you would know. I know all the Picards, there's eight million of those that worked in the shoe shops, where I was working anyway. And you know most of the, especially by face, you'd say, oh, I know that person, I know that person. You might not know everyone's name, but you probably know eighty percent of the people's names in the plant that had, Downeast had a hundred and fifty to two hundred people in there. You would know each other. They had a Christmas party, and they'd go to the bar. Things like that.

AL: Did the shoe shop sponsor any social activities at all? Like team sports or anything like that.

DP: Not really. Not that I can think of. You would have to be, someone inside would have to do it. They would say, I will start this sport, and then softball or whatever. Those are basically ones that wanted to make the shoes. I don't think they were looking at us as, in a way, they didn't like us all, they liked to keep you separated and not together, because then you couldn't rebel against them. That's what they wanted to do. They wanted to isolate you. That's what they used to do with a lot of the sewers. They call them the renegades, the people that would go from here to here. The troublemakers of some sort. And then they would take them out. But they still would need the production, so they would subcontract after these little shops that did the same shoes, and then these renegades would still sew from there. They could still sew shoes, they just didn't want them, in our early years, they didn't care.

There was people, there was fistfights, and people out in the parking lot drinking, smoking, doing all kinds of stuff. They didn't look at that. But as it got more, there were more sewers and less jobs, they got more, we're going to get rid of this troublemaker, this troublemaker. I think they tried to isolate everybody. The one thing that came on later was, where are you going to go. If you leave here where are you going to go. If you've been doing this for thirty years, where are you going to go if we let you go. That was how they kept, they didn't really want them to go, because they knew they couldn't get anybody to do what they do with their experience, but they would use that pressure.

AL: Did you ever hear any stories that maybe your dad and uncle told about the early days in the shoe shops, before you started?

DP: They have all kinds of stories. Most of them had to do with them fighting each other, but it was always friendly. I remember one time, we had these shoes, and they were all tight, which means they didn't fit very well on the last, and everybody in the

room was getting them. There was forty-five, fifty of us at the time. This was either at (*unintelligible*) or Downeast. We were right outside the office of the president, whatever they called themselves at the time, and everybody just started slamming their hammers on the benches. Everybody comes running out of the office and looking at us, because we were all angry that they weren't doing anything about this thing. They were, why are you guys making all this noise. You know what, they fixed that after that, because that was one of the – and hand sewers used to, I swear, they would be forty feet away, and have a conversation all day long, yelling back and forth, three, four rows over. And they were constantly ribbing people back and forth. Your momma jokes, and things like that. But as they got older, and the hand sewers got older, they calmed down a little bit. They weren't as young and as brash as they were.

I was always the youngest hand sewer wherever I was, even though I'd been doing it for fifteen years I was still the youngest hand sewer. They really didn't train anybody after me. They did but they, none of them ever made it, because they changed their training style of it. They used to be, it's like a pool, here's the pool, go in the water and see if you swim. Then they changed it over, when the corporates came over, and they said, okay, I'm going to take someone who's doing this job. I'm going to give you a raise to train you to be a hand sewer. But the problem was, they were feeling happy that they just got a raise to be a hand sewer, but the problem was that drive and determination thing that forced me. Like, I'm getting minimum wage and I need to make more and more to go faster. Well that didn't happen, and all these people kept failing, and failing and failing. As they were learning, they had no drive to go faster, and they got all these little hitches, because they weren't going like you're supposed to go. They were trying to make it really slow instead of making it one fluid motion. So they would fail. I was always the last one, which is weird. But I don't think I have any stories with (*unintelligible*). I probably have a hundred that they did, but I can't think of any. Most of it came from fighting and drinking, and just general arguments.

AL: Any such thing as a female hand sewer?

DP: Oh yeah, there's all kind of them. Usually, when there was a female hand sewer, it was a husband and wife. There's been plenty of them. There is some that have been regular female hand sewers, but most of the female hand sewers was a husband and wife. The husband would learn it, and teach it to the wife usually. There was some good female hand sewers. We used to have the Braylees, they had Lorraine. Lorraine was like four feet tall, and the strings were like six feet long, so she'd pull once, and then pull twice just to get in there, because she was so short. But she could actually do pretty good. A lot of the males would last for the females, because lasting was more strenuous on your, you needed more upper body strength to pull the shoes up. So a lot of times, the male would last the shoe, and she would just sew. But there were some who, I can think of three or four women that I knew along the way who did both of them. I would say women were probably, you know, one out of ten sewers were women,

roughly.

AL: That's more than I thought. I haven't talked to any female hand sewers. I'll have to find one.

DP: Oh yeah, they're there. I'd say one out of ten, that's about right. It probably wasn't way back in the, it was probably more male orientated, but when I got in there it was usually husband and wives, and then sometimes they would divorce and there would only be one left. I knew one, two, three, four, I don't know, ten, fifteen, I don't know. It was more than you'd think. Most of them did pretty good at it. It was that family thing again, where they had the other person to support them as they learned.

AL: You talked about your uncle being one of the exceptional hand sewers around. Were there others that you recall that shined?

DP: Vern Daigle, he and my uncle. Vern was probably the fastest one. There was other, I can't think of their names. A lot of those ones that were there before me, they always talked about them. I was in the top ten percent in sewing, I could sew just as fast as about anybody. My problem was that I couldn't do it every day. I had to take a break. But I know all kinds of sewers. You have fast sewers, and then you have good sewers, who would sew everything, and they look like they're samples every time. Then there are people who can do it fast, and good. That's like Vern and my uncle. But there are some people that just sewed sample shoes all the time. When you're sewing sample shoes all the time, you can't really go fast, because you want to make everything look perfect. I'm trying to think of some names.

AL: Did you know Dick Courtemanche?

DP: Dick Courtemanche, no, but I bet I know someone who does.

AL: I bet you do to.

DP: Where did he sew, do you know ?

AL: I don't recall.

DP: There was a lot of Frenchmen in the hand sewers. I don't know if you know that. I'm a non Frenchman, which made me a minority in the shoe shop.

AL: Well now, Pride, where does your family come from?

DP: It's an English name. I think we came over in 1620, in Salem, Massachusetts, someone named John Pride. I always think it's interesting that one of my relatives was accused of being a witch, and she actually sued him for defamation of character and got

like six goats and a cow from him.

AL: That's wild.

DP: Pride, in Westbrook you've got Pride's Corner and the first bridge. Those are my relatives. I never saw any of that money. We must have been the black sheep that split off down there and ended up in Lewiston.

AL: Did you know your grandparents? Did they live in Lewiston too?

DP: My grandparents on my mother's side, lived in Sabbattus, which is basically Lewiston but it's not. On my father's side, I didn't know my father's mother. She died of emphysema before I was born, right before I was born she died. And my grandfather, he was in the Army a lot. They had seven kids who used to live in Greene, and as they determine it, it was very poor. They used to travel up and down the sides of the road collecting bottles and cans. They'd walk miles and miles and miles. He moved around. He wasn't a shoe worker. I don't know where they got theirs from, but he wasn't one. My grandfather on my mother's side, he worked in Bates Mill, the one over there, for like fifty years. I see they've got some old pictures over there, in front of the machines over there.

AL: The looms.

DP: Yeah. I think he was over at the one, what's the one right by the trestle? Libby Mill. He worked there for, he didn't work when I knew him, because he was born in 1893. My mother was a later in life kind of baby.

AL: So he was almost eighty when you were born.

DP: Well, he died in '70, so that would make him eighty-something. He used to catch some good fish though. And he always had butterscotch candy.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about shoe working that you think is important to add?

DP: What are you looking for? Are you looking for a mind set? Most hand sewers are crazy too.

AL: Are they?

DP: Yes. You have to be, either that or you have to have good headphones to block out, because there's a lot of chatter that goes on, all throughout the day. Constant ribbing each other and doing things. I would say, for the most part, hand sewers are

unique, in that they're - .

AL: Very social, it sounds like.

DP: Well, some of them are not. There are some people who just go in there, and they're going to sew their shoes and go along their merry way, and they're not going to talk at all. I'd say that's twenty percent. But they have to be able to deal with the eighty percent that are just plain lunatics. We used to grease up their tools when they'd go out, so when they'd come back, or they'd have a shoe done half way, you'd cut their threads off, so that when they'd pull them, they'd pull out of the shoe. You were constantly trying to one-up each other in things you do. And then you could ride them all day long. It was friendship, but it was also, that's what I thought was very funny, it wasn't like you'd go to work and just sit there on the press. When you're hand sewing, there's no machines around so there's no real noise. You're in an open room where they just line you all up. The only real noise is if someone is banging with their hammer. It's quiet, where you can hear someone forty feet away if you're just talking like I am to you right now. So you'd have rivals and things, and they were very crazy.

I was crazy too. We would sing. We'd have everybody singing songs. We'd have fifty people singing the song at the same time, just for fun. Just to see if we could get a rise out of someone else. That was always the thing. It was always a good ribbing. I remember my uncle, this is back when you could smoke inside the shop, he'd have a big pile of ashes, like five inches high. He'd take a puff off a cigarette, and just put it up there, and he'd just be talking to the guy way over there about what they did for fishing, or what they did for this. It was constant. That was the norm. It wasn't the abnormal.

Hand sewing, I still miss it today. I liked hand sewing. Because each shoe was different. You had to figure out how you were going to do this. It wasn't a cookie cutter, boom, boom, boom. You could take twenty sewers and twenty pairs of shoes and you put them up there, that sewer could go up there and pick his pair of shoes out, because they all have something just a little bit different. You could know, even though you took a normal person and they would say, oh, they all look the same. But the hand sewer could go over to that shoe and go, that one's mine, that one's mine. It would be a ninety, ninety five percent likelihood that he could say, that's mine right there, because you can just tell by the way you sew the shoe. You have people that would, like I would say, Dave Rancourt, when he first started, he could walk by your rack, and you'd have a shoe that wasn't very good leather or whatever it is, and it would wrinkle, it doesn't look very good, and you would try to hide it over there. And he'd come by and he could pick it right out, what's this here. And you would go, okay Dave. I mean he, like I said, he bailed my uncle out of jail before, because he needed some shoes done. I need to get this done. All right. He did a little drunk and disorderly, down on Lisbon Street. Not bad.

AL: Well, great. Thank you so much Dana.

DP: You're welcome, Andrea.

End of Interview
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