SHOE WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE

Roy Tassinari **SWOH #026**
(*Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu*) March 13, 2009

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Shoe Workers Oral History Project at Museum L-A. The date is Friday, March 13th, 2009, and we're at the home of Roy and Mary Tassinari, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Roy and Mary, could I just start by asking you to give me your names and dates of birth?

RT: Well, I'm Roy Tassinari. I will be seventy-eight in April 24, born in 1931.

MT: And I'm Mary Tassinari, Mary Newton Tassinari, and I was born April 17, 1931.

AL: And where did you grow up?

MT: Here in Auburn.

AL: What were your parents' occupations?

MT: My mother stayed at home. My father worked in the shoe industry. He was, wood heel maker, he was superintendent of the Minot Wood Heel Company for several years, and then from there went to work at the Lown Shoe Building for the Lown Wood Heel.

AL: What was the wood heel?

MT: The wood heels were high heeled shoes for women. The high heels were made out of hard wood, usually maple. Your wedgies were made out of soft wood. And during that time that he was in there, they started making what they called their glass heels, which were a plastic. I'm pretty sure they called it Lucite at the time. But it was one of the first of the plastics.

AL: What years was that?

MT: That time, well let me see, it had to be in the late thirties, early forties.

AL: Was that right in Auburn, you said?

MT: Right, that was right in Auburn. He first of all worked in the Minot Wood Heel.

That was in one of the buildings along what's now the Union Street Bypass, there were a couple of big buildings there. Then when he went to work for Lown Shoe, the Lown Wood Heel, it was in the Lown Shoe Building. Now Roy left a picture of the building back in the, well, at that time it was called the Lennon Sweet Building, and shoes were built in the whole big building. They were in the bottom part of it, with making the shoe counters. And my father was in the back part of the building, making the wood heels.

AL: And how many children were there in your family?

MT: Two, my brother and I.

AL: Can you talk about what Auburn was like when, I mean you grew up when the shoe industry was thriving.

MT: It was thriving. It came in right after, or during the Depression, when my dad was in there. And from what I can remember of the late thirties and into the forties, it was a really going industry. There was an awful lot of shoes being built in the Lewiston-Auburn area.

RT: It was the shoe city of Maine.

MT: And because of that, you've got a lot of other business that come down to it. Like the wood heel part of the business. That was completely separate, actually, from the shoe itself, because if they were making wood heels, they weren't only making them just for that company. They were making them for companies all over the country, and being shipped out. So there were a tremendous amount of wood heels being made. And then later, of course, the plastic ones. And with the wood heels, those all had to be covered with leather, the same leather that the shoe was made out of, so that they were the same color. That was quite an operation in itself. But when the glass heels came about, then those got kind of fancy, and they even etched them out and did all kinds of designs on them and whatever. It was fun to watch. But then of course it also, I mean that developed during the World War, Second World War, so you had that going on here in the twin cities. My father was involved in being an auxiliary fireman at the time. His father was an air-raid warden. And we did, we had air-raid black outs and things.

AL: What was that like?

MT: It was kind of eerie, I'll tell you. There were times -

RT: You had to go around, on your houses, we lived not too far from here growing up, I lived right on Cushing Place, right up here off of Western Avenue. At night time, her father would go out, during the war, and you had to be blacked out. You couldn't have any lights going out of your windows or anything else. The street lights were off and

everything. They were made so that if any plane did come over, they wouldn't be able to see any part of the cities and stuff like that. You couldn't go out with your vehicles with the full headlights. You had to have little slits in them, almost like your military vehicles do today. But anyway, this is all back in that area, when the shoe industry was thriving too. I don't know if we want to get into the counter part of it right now, but this is what my father did. He came up from Lowell Mass, in 1934, I think I was two years old. And then we located in the Lown Shoe Building, downstairs, on the bottom floor, in the back part actually, and then it moved to the front part. During the war, it was amazing that we made these shoe counters that goes in the back part of the shoe, goes off the last. At one point, we were doing over a million pair a week. We were doing it with women because all the men had gone to war. Then of course they came back after the war, and then most of them stayed. But then we kept some of our women, and they were some of the best molders, let's put it that way, than the men were. It was ironic, but that's happening in today's world too.

AL: So you were born in Massachusetts.

RT: I was born in Haverhill, Mass, and then my folks moved to Lowell. My father was running that shoe counter factory down in Lowell, Mass., and they moved up to Maine because Maine was where the shoe industry was booming. I just talked to the owner last night, Dean Frieze (*SP?*), he was the, he came into it a little bit later, but Harry Brown was the owner of Brown Counter Company in Haverhill, Mass, and this was an offspring from that counter company. And then it moved to Maine and become New England Counter. Brown Counter was still down there in Haverhill, but then New England Counter came up here to Maine and it thrived for many, many years. We made the back part of the shoe, which a lot of people don't even realize it's there. It's the part that holds your heels up onto your foot. And the shoe lasts, that many have probably seen at some point in time, they have to be fitted to these lasts with the different types of heels, and all kinds of different kinds of patterns and styles that we had. We had over four thousand styles that we had to keep making counters for. Especially the high heel end of it. I have one particular die right here that was the first counter that was made for New England Counter up in Maine, and this was presented to my father back years ago, and it had an inscription on it. That's a men's counter, by the way. That part there would go from a larger men's counter, which I don't have right here.

MT: That of course is the way it's cut, but then from there it has to be *(unintelligible)*.

RT: These here are put on sheets of fiberboard, which is about, almost three feet wide by five feet long, and they're only about maybe less that a quarter of an inch thick, and they come in palettes. Then these here dies are put on the sheets under a cutting machine, which comes down the with a big beam duct, Dinker cut, they call it, and it comes down and cuts those counters out. A guy that's on the machines really, it was a

very, very dangerous job, because there you are, you're holding this thing, you're bounding on this die, up and down that sheet, like that, and that beam is coming down and cutting it off. And we have had a few guys cut their fingers off and stuff like that. Usually on the top, more so than under the bottom of the die.

AL: Wow, and you would think it would be under.

RT: Believe it or not, I would go there and pick up the finger and reattach it, the doctor would reattach it in some cases, if it wasn't too badly smashed and stuff like that. But this happened throughout the industry, not just in the counter. In the shoe industry, when they're making the shoes and stuff there, when they're putting the fastener together, there was not safety issues at that point. You would just make it, and that's what it was. These are various other dies that we had that made little inserts and cookies and stuff down like that. And I also had a small counter factory. I moved up from Haverhill, called Tass Counter Company. What we did was, mainly made the inserts for the arch supports for the shoes. I did this out of a little operation right here. We did that for a few years, and there got to be a point where I worked pretty hard doing that, and then being, I became superintendent of New England Counter Company, because my father had retired at that point.

AL: So you followed in your father's footsteps.

RT: Yup, yup. Then of course, later on in years, it steadily decreased as the machines and the whole situation started going overseas. Then of course our sales dropped off dramatically, and then eventually New England Counter was bought out by Gould and Scammon, which was our competitor. And it was a debate whether we were going to buy them out or they were going to buy us out, and it kind of went back and forth for awhile, and then they bought us out, and I went with them for five years. I was purchasing agent and quality control. After that I was gone, and then I went into retirement myself.

AL: So tell me, you grew up in Auburn.

RT: Yeah, we both, Mary and I both graduated from Edward Little High School in 1949, in fact we're having our sixtieth year reunion this year. We're on the committee.

AL: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

RT: I had one sister. She had one brother. She was, my sister was a teacher in Massachusetts. She still lives down there, actually.

AL: Talk to me about the Auburn community, as a community, and what it was like when you were growing up at the time?

RT: Well, if you know Auburn and you know where Walmart is and that whole area, you may not remember when that was just plain Whiteholme Farm, and that's when we saw it, back in our young years, our teenage years and stuff like that. It really has boomeranged. The whole Center Street was not Center Street like you know today. It was just a plain two-way road, and that's all it was.

MT: In fact, you lived -.

RT: I lived on Center Street the first year, right there where, on the top part of KMart lot, right there. Of course that house got moved way back down. That was a terrible year. It was cold, the wind would go right through the house and everything. Then we moved to Cushing Place here in Auburn.

MT: But you were out of town when you were out there on Center Street.

RT: Yeah, you were outside.

AL: Was Court Street the downtown?

MT: The downtown, yes. This was up here. This is all pretty old, right up in here.

RT: This house was built in 1858, approximately, we figure.

MT: But as you went up there, on the left, up there where there's all those nice new houses, in that area, that was another farm.

RT: That was Merrill Haven Farm.

MT: That was Merrill Haven Farm, and that whole area was all farm. Of course, right over here, on the next street over here, is Merrill Hill School, and that was a little school. All of our kids went to school there. But that's now an alternative school. First of all, they closed it up and used it as a storage area for awhile. And then they made it into an alternative school for the middle school. Well, Western Avenue, that was all there when we were in school, so in the forties that was all there. That probably was built up either, probably just before the Second World War, I would say, it must have been an era in there. Maybe even just as the war was starting, that general area.

RT: You got to remember too that this was the shoe city in Maine, Auburn was. And right across the street from Lown Shoe Building was the Smith Shoe Company, and then there was another one that, which burned. And right there where Hannaford is, right now, today, was two other shoe factories, right there in that whole lot area, right there. It was amazing, because you went out Hotel Road and there was Air Tred Shoe

out there, and then there was BonAir, which came later on in years.

MT: And where Denny's is, there was a whole huge, other big building, just like the Lown Shoe Building.

RT: There was the Cushman Hollis Building.

MT: And then going Down Union Street - .

RT: There was Clark Shoe.

MT: There was another one going down there.

RT: Yeah, right there where you buy computer supplies and stuff, right there.

MT: Staples.

RT: No, not Staples, their competitor.

MT: What's the other one?

AL: Office Max.

RT: Office Max, yes, that was a big shoe factory right there. That was Clark Shoe. That burned at the very end, and of course they took it down.

MT: They used it as a storage area for a long, long time, and then it burned.

RT: And that's where Mary's father worked at the very end.

MT: At the very end he was working down there, yeah.

RT: But it was a big, big era for the shoe industry. And then of course, like I said, it declined and started going over seas. And then little by little they went out, or dissolved or whatever. And then the buildings got tore down, one by one. It's amazing that the Lown Shoe Building, which like you said, was the London Sweet Building, way, way back, is still there today, but they've kept it and maintained it, and of course now there's the little warehouse store down at the bottom floor, stuff like that. The banks, I guess, have the top floor for storage, for records and stuff like that. But there is no more manufacturing going on. I don't know really if, I don't think there's anything in Lewiston-Auburn area that really is doing much for manufacturing. Maybe over in the Continental Mill, over in Lewiston, which we moved to back in the late seventies, I guess it was, for a few years. I think there might be, there was two or three shoe factories in that mill at

that point. I think I might be able to have more information on this stuff if we dig into it a little more. This all came up all of a sudden.

AL: Yeah, well I'm trying to think, you said you started working in the shoe industry in the fifties, so you were in your twenties, and you were teenagers during World War Two. What sorts of things were you able to do as teenagers, for social things?

RT: Don't forget, Edward Little was originally down there on Academy Street. That's where we went, which is now being used as multi things, and a theater thing, whatever it is. Social things, when I was in high school, of course my father was running the counter factory, and then as a side job we had a little lobster business. So every week I had to leave from high school and go down to the coast and pick up a thousand pounds of lobsters and bring them back to Auburn and Lewiston and sell them to places like the Plaza Grill, the Joy Inn Restaurant, which is all gone. Nanking Restaurant, that one is all gone. And we had all these other places that I had to peddle these things out. Mostly lobsters, sometimes clams and stuff like that. Of course, later on in years, we have a place down in Harpswell that I grew up as a kid, and of course her folks did too, down at Lookout, and we rent it as a bed and breakfast right now at Lookout Point in Harpswell, called Bellevue By the Sea. It's BellevueMaine.com if you want to go on the Internet, and you'll see me with a pot of lobsters there and stuff like that. We still run that. We got already reservations for this summer. We've been doing that for twenty-two years. That's part of the thing after retirement, we kind of do that, only in the summer. It's closed up right now. But anyway, that's where I met her, down there. I was raking sea moss down there in the summer, and if you don't know what sea moss is, it's a cauliflower type of seaweed which grows below the seaweed line at very low tides, and you have to rake it with rakes like that, and you brought it up by the boat loads and you sold it for, I think at that time I was only getting a half a cent a pound. But my boys, as they grew up, they were getting about a cent a pound. And they dry it up and use it as a gelatin, as a thickener for toothpaste and stuff.

MT: Things that you see carrageenan in. Carrageenan is what they get from sea moss. It's also gotten from kelp, and I think they get more of it from kelp now than they used to.

RT: So then, as I kept coming up through there, and I come up through there, and she was trying to show me where her vaccination was.

MT: Oh, come on.

RT: And that's when I met her.

MT: But we were in the same class at school, but we really didn't know each other in school. We had a class of around two hundred and forty, and we really didn't, I mean I

knew who he was, but that was it. But when I was in school I was in the band, so I was pretty busy. We had a good band. But getting back to the war and everything, I was in the band. Of course we didn't have a ninth grade in high school, our ninth grade was in with the seventh and eighth grade. But in 1945 I was in the band, and we took a trip to Canada, to Montreal, because this was the first band - .

AL: Competition.

MT: Well, it was a competition, but it was called something else. I can't think of what it was called. But it was the first one since the war, because during the war they didn't have it. They still had band in school, but they didn't have the competition and stuff. So we went to Montreal by bus. But that would have been in 1945. There were a lot of things that didn't get done during the war.

RT: And we all didn't look quite like this photo right here, back when we were teenagers. That was a *(unintelligible)* over at Marco's in Lewiston. This one here is just one that they took a picture of us.

MT: But another thing that had happened during that time was, Edward Little, the top floor of Edward Little burned. They had a big fire down there. So for quite a long time we were at Webster, which I think we were in seventh or eighth grade at that time, and because of the fire that they had at Edward Little, they had to close the school down. So they came up and used Webster School, the high school did. They went to school mornings, and we went to school afternoons. So that was kind of very different.

RT: Going back to the counter business there, I have an earnings record here from 1958, which I had a gross pay of eighty five dollars a week. That gave me a yearly earning of two thousand, two hundred and ninety-five dollars a year. That was in the year 1958. Goes to show you had (*unintelligible*) right now. You can't hardly get that for an hour. I just happened to find these downstairs.
MT: You had something you found a long time ago though, that was way, way back when your father first came up here. And it was -

RT: Like forty-some odd dollars a week, I guess it was.

MT: I think it was less than that even.

AL: And now you had those records because this was your - ?

RT: When we were sold out to Gould and Scammon, I just grabbed a lot of stuff. I got a whole bunch more of this stuff, like records, payroll records and stuff like that, which is quite interesting, considering the time. Eighty-five dollars a week, and the health insurance was only a dollar twenty-five. Income tax was six dollars and ten

cents, and FOAB, that's a dollar ninety-one. This goes to show you that, you know, I only brought home seventy-five dollars a week. At that point we already had two, three kids already at that point.

MT: Fifty-six, '57, we had two. Karen didn't come till '59.

RT: Four boys and two girls.

AL: Do they all still live close?

RT: They're all in Maine. One of my sons runs the Electrical Xystems of Maine out there on Minot Avenue, right across from Morris and Sylvester. He's got quite an operation. He's got twenty-three vehicles on the road all the time.

MT: Our oldest son lives down in Arundel, he works out of New Hampshire for, they make machines for the -

RT: Newspaper industry. He's just now gotten hurt very badly. Your newspapers, you know what's going on with that industry right there. That's another whole situation that's going on. You get it on your Blackberry and stuff like that, the news and stuff like that, on the internet. I got a computer and I got a fax machine and everything else right here, but I have to because I was the president of the Maine Snowmobile Association back years ago, and I'm still chairman of Maine Tourism, and I'm involved in the bed and breakfast and stuff like that. All this information is coming through the Internet and stuff like that. It's not like back in those days. They didn't even know that about keeping records. It's a wonder these were even typed out back in those days.

AL: Did any of your children work in the shoe industry?
RT: My children, yes, when they were in high school, they came there and they worked in the factory. My daughter was a, packed counters for a while, and she decided that was not what she wants to do for her life. That's my oldest daughter, and she became a music teacher. She works now in the Yarmouth school system, and she's a music teacher down there. My youngest daughter never did work in the shoe factory, because she was too young.

MT: It was gone by then.

RT: But my sons did. They did deliveries and that type of thing, and they decided that wasn't what they were going to do either. Two of them are electricians. I've got one that's a carpenter. Then of course the oldest one is -

MT: Patty works right now as the secretary at Fairview School, but she worked in a bank for quite a number of years. Right now, she's kind of waiting to see if she gets into

nursing school. She's decided she wants to be a nurse.

RT: She'll know next week, I guess. And of course, don't forget, before we were married, I was in the Air Force for four years, and I was two years in New York and I was two years in Germany. Of course we've been having Air Force reunions. In fact, we've got one coming up in Chicopee, Mass., this coming fall. We've been to Colorado, to Canada, we've been to, the International Snowmobile Club was -

MT: And we went back to Germany.

RT: And we went back to Germany, back to the same base, and I showed her where my bed was. So, I mean we kind of bounced around. We haven't gone, no, not to China, but we've gone to other places. We went to Alaska and that type of thing.

MT: This is an old picture. This picture taken in 1923, it was in the paper in 1985. Somebody gave me the picture, and I think my mother is in this picture. She did work before I was born, and I don't know where she worked. I think that was her.

AL: Does it say which place it is? It's a stitching room, but -

MT: Several months ago, we ran a picture submitted by Mrs. Joe *(unintelligible)* featuring the stitching room of the Alt Williamson Shoe Company, and I think that's the one my mother worked for.

RT: Yeah, because when we lived on Cushman Place there, up on top of *(unintelligible)* Hill here, the Alts was our landlords at that point, and I remember bringing down the rent, five dollars a week I guess for the rent and stuff like that. That was the Alt Shoe, that's right. I don't, that was way before my time as far as knowing part of our customers or something. But our customers for the counter industry was all over the country too. That wasn't just situated here in Maine. We were shipping counters to Red Wing Shoe, which is still in operation today, and that was where a lot of boot supplies and stuff like that. Of course they do make military shoes now too. That was another thing, we had military contracts that required a lot of speciality made back part, counters, made of water resistant material and stuff like that.

AL: There were so many people in the community that worked in the shoe industry.

RT: Right, either shoe or in the mills.

AL: Right. When the shoe shops started closing, did you have a lot of friends that moved? What happened, dynamically, to the workforce? Do you have a sense of that?

RT: A lot of them stayed. I think at that time, when it started to downsize, the shoe

industry people were getting older too. I think your people at that time were probably in their late fifties, early sixties, almost getting at that point right there. So they either hung on, or they -

MT: And of course, Social Security came into being, so I think a lot of them retired. Of course the younger people weren't going into it because it was obvious it was a dying industry.

RT: It was not one of those things that -

MT: So a lot of it kind of worked out all right, but it was the ones stuck in the middle. His father's generation, it was fine, they were all at retirement age. But it was the next generation down, it was our generation that had the problems. They just had to go elsewhere, find something else to do, which was not easy. I mean, when you're told when you're fifty-five, fifty-six years old that you're not needed anymore, where do you go find a job? I mean we were at a time when it's like right now, where there's a lot of unemployment.

RT: That's going to be the story today too.

MT: There was just no place to go.

RT: And that was during the Depression years too.

MT: That was a depressed era, or a recession, or whatever you want to call it. But that was one of the reasons we started doing the bed and breakfast. I was still working.

RT: Because she was a hustler.

MT: Because I worked in the hospital. At that point, in the late eighties, this would have been in the last eighties.

RT: She was a medical technologist.

MT: There were five of us women working in a lab who were supporting our husbands. We used to joke about that. There was a lot of unemployment at that time. There wasn't much to find. Certainly there wasn't anything that you were, there was nothing that you could do that you were used to doing. Whatever you went into, you had to do something else.

AL: What haven't I asked you that you think is important to add? Like the process. We haven't talked about this tool here. It looks, I'll just say on the tape, it looks to me like, in some ways, a pestle, but very, very heavy.

RT: And it's got, it's bound by leather rings actually, rings of leather, and they have to replace them every once in a while. This right here would unscrew off of here, and this was used to bang on cutting dies to either cut out paper patterns or some very light material. You could not use something like that to use on dies to cut through the heavier counter board, because it would just not be heavy enough.

MT: I've got one question I want to ask. Did they cut just one layer of board at a time, or did they put more than one layer?

RT: They cut five layers of fiberboard, there was five layers that they cut at a time. So they were all cut out in sheets, and then they were all stacked in boxes, and then the process went through a skiving machine, which skived out the counters and made them into a process of slicing off just the very, very edge so that they could be formed and made to go and be, this here is pretty much the pattern of this right here. And it goes through a molding machine. The material is wet first, and made to go through a molding machine, which becomes this process. This is what they call a stitch down counter, which goes on a shoe last, which is made with a sole, and the counter is stitched to the sole on the last. It's not stitched to the last itself. And then the rest of the process of the shoe is being made and fitted to the last. Then it all comes to be one product. But this is going way back in the beginning, and where it's cut off from the die and then it goes through a skiving machine, and then they go through a laxing machine, which kind of half rolls it, and then it goes to the molder, who'll mold it into the final product, and then they go through the packing process, and it goes out to the various customers.

MT: Okay, now once it's molded, what keeps it from coming out? There's no heat or anything else?

RT: No, no, once it's rolled, we did have a process where we did have heated molds for some of the material that we had, but not the regular molding machines. It was just done cold. They were very damp and moist, and you had to keep a burlap bag at night, a damp burlap bag over the material if you didn't have them finished, so they wouldn't dry out. Otherwise you couldn't mold it dry.

MT: No, it would crack.

RT: Yeah, it would crack, yeah. And once it's molded it goes into a basket, then it dries, and then they throw it onto a packing bench, and there's women packers that are packing these in bunches of five, and then they pack them together and they're shipped to the different customers. It's quite a process, especially when you're talking a million pair a week. That's a lot of counters and stuff like that, that's two million pieces, that's a million pair we're talking.

AL: I know people have talked about, that operations moved overseas and that was part of the decline of the shoe industry. Was there any other factors that you saw contribute to that?

RT: You know, a lot of the process went overseas like that, and a lot of the machinery and stuff went over there. But a lot of it got trashed and got junked. I know a lot of our molding machines never went anywhere. They were just trashed into scrap metal. It's too bad.

MT: As far as the counters were concerned, that was kind of faded out. Most of your shoes, you don't find counters in them anymore.

RT: And they went into plastic counters from there. They went with what they called back part molding. Back part molding was a process which was poured plastic into a mold, and then it just came out all done. They didn't have to go through the whole molding process. That's what back part molding was.

MT: But most of your shoes, I mean boots all, boots all still have counters in them. But most of your shoes don't have much of a counter, because there's so many sneakers. Of course sneakers really came into being around that time too, because at that point we had, what was the one you went to work for, for a little while there. Etonic. But that was an altogether different thing. You didn't have these kind of parts that went into the shoe.

RT: Counters, of course going back a little ways, from the beginning part, you had to have a pattern maker, had to make paper patterns. From the paper patterns, then we'd send that to the die shops, these particular die shops. We had one, Maine Die, which was affiliated with our counter factory, and they would take, and they'd make a tin template like that. And then from the template, they would go and make the die, which is similar to that. This happens to be a children's one, one and a half inch size counter that we're looking at here right now. And of course then it goes from that process to the cutting die, and the cutting die goes and starts cutting the material out and stuff like that. But that's another process too, because you've got the die shops that have to be around here to make the dies, so that we can use the dies to make the counters.

MT: But the counters themselves, that was a real art in designing the counters. I mean they had to fit perfectly. If you've got one type of a shoe here, and you've got to have this counter, you've got to have all the sizes. You've got to have, you can't take one counter and put it in every shoe. Every size has to have a die. And it's very important as to how that thing fits. There were certain people, his father was very good at it, but he was not. He never got into doing that part of designing the dies. But that was quite a process in itself.

RT: My father was in there. Then of course as I came up, because I was assistant superintendent, of course when he retired I became superintendent. These here are leather cookies. Now, they're not the type that you eat. They are sized. Also they are cut off from a die. I think that is, yup, that's the style that that was cut out of, I guess.

AL: What is a cookie?

RT: That cookie there is what goes on the inner part of the shoe to keep it, it's an arch support really.

AL: Arch support, okay.

RT: That is what I did when I came up from Haverhill, the first few years at Tass Counter Company.

MT: Most of those are made out of foam now.

RT: And this is the leather that you'd probably cut that particular thing out of. After it's skived, that's what it looked like. But that's the material, the raw material right there, cow hide.

AL: Did you have leather suppliers?

RT: I had to get that out of Brockton, Mass., I had to have them come up with bags of leather. They would have leather hides that they would cut up different materials for the shoe industry that goes into the regular shoes, then they'd have large pieces that were still left over. Of course I would have to buy the pieces that I could cut these out of, and they would be delivered up here by the truckload, actually by the ton. Then I had to cut them up. I had a cutting machine downstairs here actually.

MT: I had a skiving machine, because I used to skive them.

RT: And a skiving machines, yep.

MT: When I was home with the kids. I didn't work when the kids were small.

RT: She was up here putting them together.

AL: A team effort.

MT: Yes.

RT: You needed to supplement your income, whatever it was. It wasn't very great in

those days. Of course things didn't cost that much. A loaf of bread didn't cost a dollar and a half like it does today. It was only ten cents a loaf. I guess everything is relative when you think about it. Gasoline was only five gallons for a dollar or less. But that's pretty much what we've done. Like I said, during the high school days, I went down and got lobsters and stuff like that. My father also dropped, during the war there was gas rationing, gas rationing was a big thing, and he used to get extra coupons to go to Harpswell, because we'd haul soda and supplies down to the stores down there. So every weekend we'd go down there with the whole back of the trailer full of soda and supplies. And during the rationing years, you don't realize it, but butter was rationed, and meat was rationed, and everything.

MT: And sugar.

RT: And sugar, and stuff like that.

AL: So each family got only so much.

MT: Yes, yes. We had coupons and you could only get so much. And meat was.

AL: Well great, thank you so much.

End of Interview
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