

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

Jerome Feinstein
(Interviewer: *Andrea L'Hommedieu*)

SWOH #031
July 29, 2009

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Shoe Workers Oral History Project at the Museum L-A. The date is July 29th, 2009, and today I'm at the home of Jerome Feinstein in Auburn, Maine, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Mr. Feinstein, would you start just by spelling your name for me, to be sure we have it correct?

Jerome Feinstein: The last name is F-E-I-N-S-T-E-I-N, Feinstein, first name Jerome, J-E-R-O-M-E.

AL: And where and when were you born?

JF: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in the year 1915, July 20th.

AL: Well, happy belated birthday.

JF: Thank you very much.

AL: And did you grow up in the Boston area?

JF: No, I grew up in New Bedford, Mass. In fact, I went to school, graduated from the New Bedford High School in New Bedford.

AL: And what were your parents' names?

JF: My father's name was Benjamin, and my mother's name was Rose.

AL: What was it like growing up in New Bedford at that time?

JF: Well, that was a whaling town, so I went there just, in fact I left there at a very young age, after I graduated. You have to remember, it was during the tough times, during the Depression. So when I graduated high school, that was in the year 1934, in February of '34, I was very much interested, in fact I was the top of my class in math and the sciences. And the teacher, the assistant principal, the headmaster of the school, was a graduate of MIT, and his son also graduated from MIT, but things were so tough he ended up as a Massachusetts state trooper, and I was accepted to go to MIT at the time. And from that point on, actually I left, I left after my graduation, so from there on, the only time I came back home was to see my folks and to see my brothers and sisters.

AL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JF: I had two brothers and three sisters. The three sisters are all older than me, I'm the oldest boy. Just this past year we lost my brother, next to me, so I've only got the baby of the family now. He's in his eighties already, so he's a young kid.

AL: What did your parents do for work? I take it your mother was probably was in the home working.

JF: Oh yeah, she was busy with the kids, taking care of them, yes. This is going, you're going way back, yeah she was there. And my father was superintendent of, when he was in Boston, he was superintendent of Baron and Anderson Coat Factory, (*sounds like*). In fact, I think they're still existing to this day, they're well known for their coats. Then he decided to go into business for himself, so he opened up a tailor shop, and he moved to New Bedford. This is when I came into the picture. So he opened up a tailor shop there, then he expanded down there, and he had a bunch of tailors working for him. And that was a mill town, and you had the cotton brokers down there, and the bankers, and it was something, he was renowned for his suits, to have his label on your suit, you know, tailor made suits, (*unintelligible*) around, so he had all the cotton brokers and the bankers were his customers. So he went along that way.

Now I come along, the genius, and he wants me to, I go in there for interviews for myself, after all, I want to go with my schooling. But now you're looking around and everything, they're standing, they're selling apples for a nickle on the corners, this is how tough things were. Don't forget, your there in the Depression, this is really the Depression. Well, I forget, well maybe, even from the headmaster there, Mr. Williams there, maybe, he says, when you get through, you can come back here and teach, you know, at the high school. I says, there isn't enough money in teacher. I'd become all of a sudden a big shot now, I said there isn't enough there to keep me here. I says, I don't think I would want to stay here. He says, well anytime you make up your mind, he says, we can help you along in the academic field because you excel in there, he says, you're a natural for it.

So I thanked him very much, and Mr. Searles the same thing. And he kept twisting my arm all the time, because I'd meet him on the street and he said, when are you going, you want to go back. He had such a population, only one high school there, so the freshmen had to go to school in the afternoon, to accommodate all the students, because the city I think at that time had a population of a hundred and thirty-nine thousand, a hundred forty, for one high school, were really jammed in there. So this is what they were all looking for, and this is how tough things were at that time. And that took care of my situation in New Bedford.

I, myself, for sports and everything, my mother, once I told her I was going out for football, forget about it, you're going to get hurt. So I became a tennis star all of a

sudden. Anyway, I did, I loved tennis, I became the champion of the city, junior champ. Anyways, I figured, (*unintelligible*) get out of here. And my mother's younger sister, their maiden was Barr, B-A-double-R, and she was living with us at the time. She left and got married, and she married Joe Koss, who came down here in Auburn, Maine, opened up a shoe factory. You starting now to see how things, how I got dragged down to Maine.

And I came down, and since I graduated in February and I'm hanging around the house now, my father says, come on with me, because he went in the importing, he got rid of his tailor shop, and he started importing bananas and all this stuff and fruits from the islands and everything else. Then he bought schooners, big schooners, went on trading, and would send it out there, the captain come in, they'd load it with merchandise, with cars and trucks, and they'd sell them, go to Africa. In fact (*unintelligible*) brought back a picture where they ran into a tribe in Africa where the chief of the tribe there was trying to match him up with one of his daughters. There was always a standing joke in there. I said, if that's the best you can do, pop, I says, we got trouble. Anyways, coming back, I don't know what this has got to do with me, nothing. Anyways, this is how I came up to Maine, because in February I got out of school, hanging around the house, he's going to buy me a car, to keep me there, he says (*unintelligible*).

AL: So, it was your aunt.

JF: She was my aunt, and she was like an older sister to me, that's how close we were. So she said, she turned about and said Jerry, why don't you come on down, she says, they'll find you something to keep you busy in the factory, she says, until you make up your mind. Well, I also had uncles in the Boston area who were in the electrical and wholesaling supplies, they were one of the biggest down there, this and that. Well, I go in and talk with him. Well, he kind of but the kibosh on me, because he introduced me to last year's valedictorian, graduate from MIT, who was working for him with dirty overalls. And he brought him in, he says, I want you to meet somebody, since you're so interested in MIT, he says, I want you to meet him. He introduced me, very nice fellow, this and that, and I said, when did you graduate. He says, last year. He said, I'm very happy your uncle hired me over here. Well, his job was unloading freight cars. He used to stock because they had big, you know, they were the biggest suppliers in the wholesale stuff there. So he was there, dirty, you know, I'm looking at him and I think, boy, this is really something, you have to go to MIT to go unload.

So I came down here and I come in and I see this, I was just fascinated with it anyways, I just started going through. Well, he says, why don't you, they had to give me something to do here, so I started work in the shipping department. So I worked in the shipping department, and the hours were longer, and they didn't have any time, set, this is all before this forty hour a week came in, before you had any unions, before you had anything. So we had long days, six days a week, all day Saturday, too. But it didn't make any difference to me because I still couldn't make up my mind what I want to do. I figured I got all summer to go through, I can go back, I can go here, I can go there.

Anyways, he went in the business, and you had now the factories around in this area, he had to buy his building, they wouldn't rent him any space when he came down here. So he had to buy a building, he bought his building down there on Hutchins Street, in Auburn, and that's where he opened his factory. And they bought the machinery from, there was an old men's shoe factory up here, Field and Flint, Field Brothers and Flint, I think was the real name, but he bought machinery from there. A fellow by the name of Joe Goodman, who was superintendent of the Braintree Shoe, down in Braintree, Mass., making men's shoes, befriended him, because when he was living in Averil, Mass. at the time, Joe Koss, before he got married, and they were friends down there. So they got together, and anyways, he was the one that came up, he was the guy with all the knowhow, which was right down his alley. Field and Flint were making men's shoes over here, or were at one time. Now they were closed down at that time so this, I'm going back to the year 1929, that's when he came down here. If I'm going back too far, let me know.

AL: You're fine.

JF: Then I went back – this can go on for about three weeks you know. You'll have to sift it out afterwards and say, hey, what's going on here. You might as well lay down there and take a nap.

AL: So he got the shop.

JF: He's got the shop, he got Joe Goodman down here as his superintendent, this and that, fine. Now I'm in the factory. And they opened up, there was a building there, Hutchins, at the end of Hutchins Street there, a box factory, and they took over one of the floors there, and they opened up a women's factory there, at the same time, you just walked from one building to the other.

AL: And was it called Koss Shoe at that time?

JF: Yeah, yeah, there was Koss number one, Koss number two. Number two was the women's factory. But that didn't last too long because, it was shortly after that, well, I came down, that was in '29, they opened up the women's factory I would say somewheres around 1933, 1932, 1933. I came down here in '34. I started to work for him in the women's factory, so they were already in business with that, I was doing the shipping there. And I worked there, well, not too long. He sold that to two men there, Jimmy Rosenberg and Ben Siegel. They named it Longwood Shoe Company. So now he's out of the women's business, and he's over there and sells me with the business, I'm with the business. I'm still staying on there now, but with Longwood Shoe, I'm no longer with Koss.

Now he goes in the business over here where you presently now got the place that

used to be Bates Street Shirt Factory, over here on Bates Street where you got the heart place. That was originally Bates Street Shirt Factory. A fellow by the name of Ed Morphy that had an idea of a new process on women's shoes, sabeeka (*sounds like*) process. This was to take the sole, where it would go through a splitter, and you would make the innersole and shave off that, and it would be a cement process shoe, just like all women's are made today. And the top part would be the innersole, which would be leather, which would actually be part, they put the, if you can picture it around a last, around the innersole part of it, and then take the outer sole, which was originally part of the whole sole there, and cement it together. So you could take it and just roll it right up in your hand, this is how flexible that shoe was. It was really, really something, because it was all part of the same sole. It was terrific. So anyways, he and Joe Goodman, and Ed Morphy, three way, they open up the shop. Ed Morphy is going to be running the Morphy Shoe Company now, that's the name, and that's the first shoe factory that went into that building, after the Bates Street Shirt Factory, and they were glad to see him.

AL: So it's the midst of the Depression, yet the shoe shops - .

JF: This is in 19-, you're going back in the, don't forget, you have the real bang in the head you got in 1929, when the bottom fell out, and now you've got it coming back. And as smart and as (*unintelligible*) and as happy as everybody was with FDR, FDR was doing the same thing that is being done today, thinking you can throw money into things to cure it. And if it wasn't for WWII coming along, that's what, everybody got busy then. This is what really, whoom, all of a sudden you came out of it. Now you're talking about 1940, '41, '42, when everybody started going, you had people running around like a nut, and this is when the whole, all your prosperity started over here.

It wasn't when, he was a great speaker, don't forget, you had no television in those days. You would listen. Finally television did come in, so everybody would gather around, you know, all snowy, you know, the reception. But, "My friends...", and he'd have that long cigarette, the holder, you know, and he'd (*unintelligible*) speaking. You thought he was wonderful. He was, everybody fell in love with the guy. He put in, the first thing to go in, they came along with the, not so much the wage and hour, but the hours came in. First they came in, you had a minimum hours were forty-two hours a week, and then it was overtime for Saturdays, and you started, you could catch your breath now. You know, the only thing you could do was work six days a week. Boy, that was a lot of work. Of course if you're young, to me it didn't mean anything, you got nothing to do anyways. And you're interested in going ahead. I didn't date, I didn't do anything. I didn't even smoke at the time. Anyway, you're just busy because you've got a goal that you set for yourself, you don't know where you're going. You have no goal. It's like your, what's the name, the catcher for New York Yankees, what the heck's his name there. He always comes out with clichés. When you come to a fork in the road, take it. You don't know what you want to do. You don't know whether your on foot or horseback.

Anyways, they opened up Morphy's Shoe, and I'm working for Ben Siegel at Longwood Shoe, now you need help over there, and he's invested with it. Well, okay, I'm related to Joe Koss and this and that. He calls me in, you know, I'm over there, they invite me over for dinner one night, and he's sitting there talking to me. He's looking at me, he says, you know, for a young kid, you're a pretty smart guy. I says, thank you very much. He says, how come, he says, you never express an opinion. I says, I will some day, when I know what I'm talking about. He says, you're all right. I says, no, I listen. He says, no, you're all right. He says, how about coming over, give your notice and come on over and work for us over there. I says, doing what. So he says, well, what are you doing over there. I said, I'm shipping and receiving. I don't have anybody under me, and I only have one man over me, and it's one of the owners, Ben Siegel. That's the only guy I answer to over there. So he says, well, you'll answer to Mr. Morphy, if that's what you're worried about, he says, come on over, pay you the same money. I says, it isn't the money. He says, it isn't? I says, no. He says, I'm not following you. I says, well, this is something maybe you want to remember as long as we know one another that, well, I says, you know, when you go to school, I says, when you're going through, you don't ask, I says, you're learning, your learning, your learning and learning until, I said, the tassel goes on the other side. When that happens, and that tassel goes to me, when I've learned everything I want and the tassel's on the other side, whoever got me, if they got me, that's the guy that will have to pay.

That's when he said, I'll tell you what I want. I said, okay. He says, you're going to be a tough cookie. I says, don't tell me what I'm going be, I says, because I really haven't made up my mind yet if I want to stay up here, or if I'm interested in it. There's too many fields I want to go. I'm loose, I'm away from my home, I haven't got my family here, they're not here. I says, I can do all of this, I can travel around the world, go with my father, buy schooners, boats, loads of them. I says, my gosh, I don't even know, I'm like a kid with so much candy, walking into a candy store, you don't know what to grab first. I don't know. I got guys telling me, why don't you become a scientist. I says, that's what I'd like, to help people. You know what would happen to me, I said, I like chemistry so much. He says, what would you like. I'd like to put myself in a room, in a lab, and sit there and work on stuff from waste, and see what I can do to help people. That's all I want to do. I don't want to be the richest guy in the world. I just want to know I did something, that will make me happy. I don't know where I want to go. I'm a young kid, I'm seventeen years old. He says, come on over. I says okay, I'll go over, I says, but you may not be happy with me, because I don't know where I want to go, I don't know what I want to do. I may take all this and even take a year off, and I says, go around, then go back to school. I don't know.

I had cousins that even to this day, are teaching at Yale. They went down, they worked with Einstein, down in the Alamo down there, this and that. They were on the world concert stages, they were playing violin and cello, they were all around the symphony orchestras, all around. I said, that's my family background, from the Feinsteins. I got cousins all around, I says, one of them, she was an exchange student, I says, over

there to England. I come back, I said, I don't know what I want. I don't know what I want. You can't get angry at me. I said, even if you said to me you're going to fire me, fire me, and I said, I can pack up and go home, I says, maybe you're doing me the biggest favor in the world. It cuts out one more road that I don't have to look at. You narrow it down, I said, I don't know where I want to go. I said, I'm like a wild man. I don't date, I don't go out, I this and that, I said, I'm not interested in going out. That isn't what I want, to go out on dates. Okay? They try to fix me up with everybody. And they did. Everybody, hey, you go turn around, they got this, they're running a ball over at the center over there, this and that. Why don't you take out what's her name, she's a beautiful girl. Wonderful, I'm not interested. What's the matter, you don't like girls? I love them. I had three sisters, all older than me, I know girls. I'm not interested. I got my own problems. I can only handle so many things. I'm no genius.

Okay, come on over. Okay, I wound up going over there. My aunt, Reba Koss, she says to me, Jerry, go ahead over there, you'll feel better. I says, let me ask you something, Re, what's he want, to use me as a stooge, is that what it is? Ed Morphy is a partner of his and he's running the factory, he's there all day. Is that what he wants? I says, I'm not going to be his stooge. I says, as much as I'd like to help him and I appreciate everything, I says, I can't, it's not my makeup. I can't say, hey, you know what he did, he did this one, or that, or anything I see that's going on. She says, don't worry about it, go ahead, do me a favor. And I went over there. Everything's fine now. He called me into the office, Ed Morphy. I think his son, Jack, Jack Morphy was going to Hebron Academy, so he's, Jerry, will you do me a favor, would you drive him there, he's got to go to school. Went up there, fine, I drive him up to school. He says, thank you very much. I says, you're welcome. But anyways, all of this took place, you're interested in the shoe business. I can keep you going there all day long, I never, that's why I say, I want to know how far back you wanted to go.

AL: No, this is wonderful. This is great. Just keep going.

JF: Good, you can take a nap. You take your shoes off, you can go lay down. Anyways, he calls me into the office. These are things, you know, that stay with you, because he was doing things with me. First of all I went over there on the shipping and receiving. They took over two floors in there, and then there were two, these are the two bottom floors, there's three floors, you had two more floors upstairs, over that. You had, what's his name came in and opened up a shoe factory in there, Prospect Shoe was up there. And then down on the bottom was Lerner, making heels. He was on the bottom floor. They came in, so the whole building was full now. And he had me doing that, and he put me on about seven, eight different jobs, all the way through. And his brother was packing room foreman, so between the two of them, they couldn't find enough things for me to do. They wanted to break my spirit. It was very obvious.

First the boxes would come in, where they used to put the shoes, pack the shoes and stack them up. Well, they wanted them all closer to the girls so they didn't have to go

ahead and have somebody come over and bring boxes all the time, or you need to hire somebody for that. So they'd go get it themselves. The brother comes over, why don't you move all those boxes over there. Well, you've got hundreds of big boxes. I had other things to do. He had me fitting the heels on the women's shoes, laying the soles, putting them on. This was besides the shipping and receiving. And he made sure that I was the only one on those particular jobs, because if I wasn't doing it, then the production was held up. You don't have to be a dummy, a brilliant guy to know what the hell's going on there. I figured, goddam it, you're not going to get me that way, buddy. And you clam up, you know. You come in the morning, good morning, nice smile.

And Ronny calls me into the office one day and he wanted me to close the door, I close the door, he says, stand in front of my desk. I stand in front of his desk. He says to me, you know, I like you. I says, thank you. He says, you don't squawk, we don't hear a word out of you. I says, why should I squawk. He had me sweeping the floors, that's right, on top of that. Well, in those days, they didn't have individual sewing machines, they were lines. You'd have one big motor on one hand and you'd have a shaft going down, and all the sewing machines were belt-driven, and the girls would go around. But you had to be clear from the treadle, because the thread would catch their end of you, you can't put that peddle down. They couldn't get the shoe to get down. So you had to, around the stitching room particularly, it had to be swept every night. Then I'm sweeping the factory. Sole leather. You take a sole leather, you're picking it up, your hands start bleeding in the end, you know, to put it in the sack, because they sell it to make fertilizer.

So I'm sweeping, I'd get out of there, maybe, twelve, one, two o'clock in the morning, get back again at five. I'm not saying anything to anybody, never mind going out on a date. Even if I wanted to go out on a date, you haven't got enough energy after a while. You get done, I was living at the Y, which was nice. You come in, you go swimming there, you know, Sunday, you go into the pool, oh boy. And then you go up and go to sleep because you're knocked out from the whole week, you got a six day week. Anyways, that's when they started coming in and changing the hours too, which they brought it down. Saturday was now overtime. Well, Saturday is when I used to go in and get caught up with sweeping the rest of the factory. They let all these guys go.

Anyways, there was some occasion down here that my mother and father had to come down, and after all, this is her sister. My mother says to her youngest kid sister, Reba, and I'm working Saturday sweeping the factory, they're here. And my father came down, and I was just packing up some of the sole trimmings, and he walked over. I'll never forget the expression on his face. He looked at me, he says, my God, that's what you're doing? He says, I'll tell you what, you can take that goddam job, he said, and they can shove it. You're going back with me. You're not staying here. I thought you were smart. And boy, he gave me a hell of a lecture. He says, you're going back. I says, pop, will you please do me a favor, please, will you listen to me. Maybe it hurts you. Don't say anything to anybody. Don't say anything to anybody. Leave me alone.

Let me do things my way. Maybe it's the wrong way. I know it's the wrong way, maybe. Let me come out of it myself, and I'll be better for it. It's not going to kill me. Let me do it, please. Don't say anything to mom about it, will you. He says, I'll give you two weeks. I want you to think about it, and think about it good. He says, now can you get through? Do you want me to help you so you can come back with me to the house. What am I going to tell them, I'm coming back without you. I says, no I don't want you to help me. Go sit on a chair, it won't take me long. I don't want you to help me. He didn't, I come back, and before we walked into the house I says, pop, don't forget, you promised me you wouldn't say anything to anybody, to anybody, my brothers, my sisters, no one. He says, okay, I promise you. And that always stuck with me.

So Ed Morphy, surprising, he calls me in the office one day, and I stand in front of him, he says to me, you know, I like you. I says, thank you very much. He says, but you know, they're having trouble up in the stitching room. I figured, I'll do what I can, when I can, and if you don't like it, *pfffft*, you think about it. So I didn't sweep the stitching room for a whole week. Oh boy, can you imagine all the threads and everything. Anyways, I'm down there now, he says, you know, it's very important to keep that stitching room clean. I says, I'm doing the best I can. He says, you know, if you listen to me Jerry, you're smart. I says, thank you very much, I says, but there is a little difference of opinion between you and me. I don't think I'm so smart. I think you're much smarter. I says, okay, is that what you wanted to talk about, who's smarter? He says, no. He says, I wanted to talk about the place has got to be clean. I says well, you know, there's only twenty-four hours in a day, I can't make them thirty-six. I'm not that smart. I can only do so many things, I only got two hands. I'm not that smart. I kept coming back, I'm not that smart. He says, you know, if you listen to me, I can make you the best goddam shoe man that ever came out of the state of Maine. I says, that I would like, and I'd appreciate it very much, but is that what you got to do, sweep the floor to be the best shoe man? Is that the way you started? I said, I think you're a good shoe man, from what I know about it. I think you're a smart man too, you're much smarter than I am, because I'm working for you. He says, goddam it, you're a goddam smart kid aren't you. He says, I can even use the expression, you're a smart ass. I says, maybe. I don't mean to be.

All right, he says, forget about sweeping in there, I'll get somebody to sweep in there. I says, are you doing that to help me, or what? He says, no, he says, I can see that, he said, because it's necessary, we got to keep the, it's got to be spotless. I said, okay fine. Anyways, coming down the line now, that's fine, he got over that. And not too long after that, it was arranged for me, and he's got his coat on, I come out, Mr. Morphy wants to see you. Fine, I walk out. Well, there's Joe Goodman, because they're all partners in this factory, Joe Goodman, Joe Koss, Ed Morphy. But Joe Koss and Joe Goodman are in the back office. Ed Morphy has his coat on, and he's waiting at the door for me, because he's going for me. He says, Jerry, I'm not going to be here anymore. I says, why, where you going? He says, I'm all through. You'll know about it, he says, they'll tell you about it. He says, but I want you to know one thing. Goddam it

kid, he says, you're smart, stay with it. He says, and I want to apologize for being the kind of guy that I turned out to be. Whatever you think of me, you're right. I said, what do you know what I think of you. He says, you have to. You don't know me, then. You taught me a good lesson. Thank you very much. He says, what did I teach you? I says, how to be a good boy, okay? I says, now, I said, I'm really sorry that you're going. That, I didn't wish. You're all through here, he says. I says, well good luck to you. He says, stay with it. Anytime, he says, you want to use my name for reference, you go ahead and do it, don't be afraid. He says, you'll make it, stick with it. He says, I'll say this, I think whatever you're going with, you're going to be all right. I says, thank you. And that was it. That was the end. And then I started moving around, I had to go in, I worked in the office, they wanted this and that, got in trouble with other things. I was always digging further than I had to. So, this is actually what happened with me. Now, you had the strike in 1937, the shoe strike.

AL: Oh, yes.

JF: You forgot all about it.

AL: Well, I - .

JF: You had the shoe strike in 1937. And you had that time, I would say, you had about thirty, thirty-five shoe factories, just making shoes. It had nothing to do with the component parts that had to go in, like box toes, or counters, or heel makers. All these were around, like you had Gould and Scammon over here, with counters, you had Rock Maple wood heel, you had Layton Heel. You had all the other ones that were in the Cushman-Hollis Building over here. Downstairs, A. Wilson selling threads and everything. You had all, it was busy. You had the Alma Hotel down there where all the salesmen used to come in and stay overnight, and they'd see all their customers, it was a whole day's work, you know, to stay here to go visit all the accounts around here. You had thirty, thirty-five shoe factories. You may not know him, Horace Monroe, he goes way back, oh, this goes back before 1929, that he was in a shoe factory up, going around towards Auburn Lake, and that's when he opened up the bank over here. He says there's no more money to be made in the shoe business, so I might as well get out, and he opened up the bank, Manufacturer's Trust, over there on Lisbon Street. We're coming down into the normal, the stuff that you'll start remembering. You had the strike, you had them trying to organize over here, and the shoe manufacturers got together – you running out of tape?

AL: Not yet.

JF: I bet it would get on it, maybe you should ask me questions, then I can get to some things that maybe you want to know.

AL: This is really important. I wouldn't even know to ask some of this, so your telling

me is wonderful.

JF: Yeah, you had the shoe strike in 1937, and the union didn't have a, because the manufacturers got together, the association, they got together and they formed, the union that the shoe workers got together was LASPA, Lewiston-Auburn Shoe Workers Protective Association, LASPA, and that was the union here. They maybe organized a couple of the factories. Not all of them, they couldn't get them all. And they got run out of town, see, because you had the shoe, they all combined, the shoe manufacturers combined, founded their Shoe Manufacturers Association, you know, they used to have their meetings once a week, or once a month, whatever it was. They set down their own rules. They don't steal help from one another, don't do that, that's a no-no. And they had their own this and that, but meanwhile they fit in pretty good with, Governor Brann was the governor of Maine at the time, and they had the state police down here. They were up in front of the courthouse, over here in Auburn there, parading around outside there, because you had now Packard Pharmacy there, Flanders, Auburn Lunch, you had the Auburn Theater there. And across the street you had, what's his name, Cob Watson had a clothing store. You had a bank there too. The next block up you had the post office.

Anyways, they, oh yeah, you're bringing all kinds of memories. They ran them out of town, anyways. They got them, they broke them up. And then he sold Morphy Shoe. While he was in the process of selling it, one of our buyers, one of the owners of, he had a chain of stores down through Pennsylvania, women's shoe stores, Mr. Kay. And he says to me, how would you like to go in the retail business? You talking to me? He says, yeah. I said, I never sold a pair of shoes in my life. I didn't ask you that. How would you like to go into the retail business? What are you going to do, hang around here and fight the union all the time. At that time they were parading around. Because they were bringing in people, they were bringing them in from Biddeford, and Saco, bringing them down to help out and move the shoes through. Anyways, I says, what's it mean to me. He says, look, we're opening up more stores and more stores and more stores, you'll get your feet in, get wet, you'll learn how. The only thing is, if you decide to come down, I'll meet you, you'll come to Wilkesborough, that's where his home office was, Pennsylvania. There's only going to be one man that'll know who you are. Outside of that, he's going to be hiring you. He, myself and you, we're the only three that'll know, that we all know one another. I don't want you to know me at all.

He says, what's the matter, you scared? No, I says, it never even entered my mind. He says, let it enter your mind. How long does it take for you to make up your mind. That's how long, I'm coming down. He says, I think you'll like it. I says, why did you pick me. He says, because I've seen you a few times when I come up here, and I hear guys talking about you. I hear even your uncle talk about you, he says, that kid's going to make it, boy, he's going to set them on their heels. I says yeah, that's my uncle, what do you want him to say. He says, no, nobody asked him. So anyways, I went down. So that's when I left. I left in, it was right after the strike so it had to be '38, '39,

somewheres around there, I went down to Pennsylvania. I came into the place, and the only man, Mr. D, Mr. Dexter, was managing the store in Wilkesborough, Pennsylvania. He was the only one that knew that I knew Mr. Kay.

AL: Is Mr. Kay a code word, or is that his name?

JF: No, that's his real name, K-A-Y. In fact his initials, his first name was Oscar, so his initials were O.K. That's right. So I used to laugh, I thought it was a gag, too. O.K., I says, your father must have had a heck of a good idea, he named you Oscar. Anyways, I stayed at the Y down there in Wilkesborough. He was the only one, I worked there shifting stock, and come up on Saturday, and he says, we got two star salesmen in here, these two boys are good, Eddie Fisher and a Polish fellow there, what the hell was his name, but anyways -

End of side A
Side B

JF: . . . kind of a synopsis of the factories that I left here at that time.

AL: Right, okay, so now we're on side B, and you have gone to Pennsylvania.

JF: Yeah, I'm down in Pennsylvania now. You want to stop it there?

AL: No, go ahead. Do you want to talk about, go ahead and talk about Pennsylvania and what you did there.

JF: I'm reminiscing, telling you my own story, but I didn't tell you anything about the shoes, over her.

AL: Okay, but you, for a time you went to Pennsylvania. How long a time did you go?

JF: Oh, I was down there, I'll tell you, I was the rookie for only two weeks, what they did with me down there. Two weeks. I never sold shoes to anybody. So, shifting stock for them, this and that, but then I listened to these two of them. Both of them had a terrific line, but both different approaches. One guy, in those days they had open stock – just to give you an idea of different temperament of fellows, different people – one of them, he doesn't move. And behind him, the stock were all brown shoes, medium heel, Cuban heels. These were the women's shoes. Instead of going over on the other side, on the other wall, it gets you, a girl comes in, you know, this and that. The idea was to show them only three shoes, three different styles. If not, you thirty-three them, that means turn them over. Thirty-four is to let them look. But if they ever walked, take your hat with it, and walk out with them, because you're all done, if you let them walk. All right? Now this other guy, he was such a damn good salesman. You come in, you wanted to buy pumps or something, he'd sell you what the hell was behind him on the

floor, because he wasn't going to walk to the other end of the store to get a pair of shoes for you. He sold just what was behind him. He didn't move. And he sold you. You went out, you were happy. He was terrific. And I listened to him, you know, and I listened to the other one there, and you couldn't hardly hear him talk because he was so low key. I'd try to get to him (*unintelligible*) I'm picking up something, you know, this and that, try to get to them.

Anyways, two weeks later, two weeks, Mr. Kay comes over to me, he says, Jerry, pack up your stuff, he says, we're taking you in to, you're going to go to Lancaster, to Scranton. I says, what for? He says, we're transferring you over there. I said, I only been here for two weeks. He says, so, Mr. D. says you'll sell anybody, you're just as good as any of them. I says, how the hell does he know, I only worked two Saturdays, so how would he know how good I am. Go pack up your stuff and stop asking me, and let's go, come on. So I go back to the place, and I pick it up, and he drives me from, now this is Wilkesborough, he drives me in, it's about an hour I guess away. Anyways, we drive in to Scranton, and I'm there, and then they open up a thrift department upstairs and make me manager of the thrift department, and we're all living in one hotel. All we out of towners, we took over one of the hotels, and you live as close to the store as you possibly can, because who the hell wants to walk, you know, so it's only two blocks away. You get as close as you can, and all the gang there, had a hell of a time. And not only that, Scranton, if you pardon the expression, was a wide open town. Wide open in this way, you had all these houses of ill repute down there. You knew where they were. Wide open. The girls were all examined once a week by the city doctor. Now you had these customers, women's shoes, you know, so you got them coming in, and they come in with their, this and that, and (*unintelligible*) all these chicks, you know. I'm not interested.

Anyways, I'm manager now of the thrift department. So somebody would turn around – but all of this stuff is bringing back old memories. I'm down there, forget that now, I'm already, now I can manage shoe stores, building up a hell of a reputation. Because when I left, when I said goodbye to Mr. D., two weeks, I said, so long Mr. D, I says, thanks for everything. He says, come here, don't tell anybody how long you been selling when you get up there. He said, they'll never know the difference. He says, you'll give them cards in spades and they can look sick. I says, thank you very much. He says, you hear what I'm telling you? Keep your mouth shut, you're no rookie. So anyways, I says, okay. Anyways, I went up, and they did, they pushed me up as the thrift manager upstairs. Anyway, that was that.

Now coming back to town here, you had the factories that were here, that were left here. They closed up Star Shoe Company, took over that. You had the, Phil Lown now moves his factory over to the Lown Shoe. Oh yeah, that was something going on with (*unintelligible*), because I came back here, it was real (*unintelligible*). I went into the service, and even in the service, this is off the record, even in the service, I was stationed at Mitchell Field, and then they started breaking up, making fighter squadron,

going out to Japan. The war broke after they dropped the two bombs there, and I come back and they're setting up separation centers, and I remember orders were coming through, and they wanted all guys that had a head on them, I guess, because they wanted to set them up fast, discharging soldiers. And I says, what's the nearest one to Massachusetts. Well, you got the nearest one, how about Fort Devons. No. Fort Dix, in New Jersey. That's okay, I said, I'll take it. I had this kid there, Bill Beatty from Long Island, he said Jerry, take me with you. I says, what do you think, I'm running the goddam army. I says, I got enough trouble myself. He says, hey. I say, how about putting the kid on there with me. I said, he's scared, what do you want from him. So he says, okay, he says, old man, he's the kid, hey old man, go ahead, you're back in the forties.

Anyways, I took him, the two of us go to Fort Dix. In Fort Dix even, you're discharging by rosters, you got thirty men on a roster being processed around the clock, twenty-four hours a day they're being processed. So we're setting up the records, and you're banging them all out, working on the record sections, making sure – I remember discharging Mickey Rooney, and the Dead End Kids. His name is Uhl, when I picked up his record, I look at his, you know, I said, who the hell's this guy Uhl, U-H-L. He says, why do you ask. I says, Jesus Christ, the guy was making five grand a week. He says, yeah, that's Mickey Rooney. No kidding. What barracks is he in. He says, he's in sixty-nine. Oh yeah? Yeah. See you guys later, I want to go over and have a talk with the guy.

AL: And did you?

JF: No, I couldn't. You're supposed to stay, I got mad. Once you come back to be processed to get out, three days, you've got to stay on the field, you don't leave. I go in there, I walk through the barracks, I look around, I look around, I look around, and all the guys are laying around smoking cigarettes, you know. Hey, where's this guy, Uhl? Who, Uhl? You mean Mickey Rooney? Yeah, where the hell is he? Oh, he's in town. He's where? Yeah, can't you see, and there's his luggage. He had luggage, he didn't have the goddam bags like the rest of us had. Anyways, I came back, I'm not going to spend all day. But I was running a taxi there. That shows you how anxious they were to get out. When you get out, you get your ticket, it doesn't cost you a nickel to get into town – don't forget, these are mostly New Yorkers that are getting out, we're at Fort Dix in New Jersey. You get out and they take you for a bus ride from the field to the train station, you get on a train, everything's paid for, Uncle Sam's paying for it. I'm charging them twenty-five dollars a head, because I'm laying there in the bunk there one day, just sitting there smoking, now the new kids are coming in, they're just being drafted, just coming in. They couldn't fill the spots fast enough, so they figured they'd give them their basic training later, you know, so they had them coming in. So I hear, these couple kids are talking there, talking about cars. So I says, what kind of business are your parents in, your father in. He says, he's an automobile dealer. Oh yeah? What kind of cars. He says, why? You want to go in business kid? You got a big car there, that can

hold five people, besides the driver? He says, yeah, he says, I can get one of those big Chryslers. It's okay by me, as long as it's a good one. You want to go in business? Bring it down here. He says, you kidding? No, so I tell him this and that. We used to go, I paid somebody, went out three times a day. I'd take one shift, he'd take another. I says, keep the money you make, that's yours. I kept what I made, and I paid the other guy, another one, Clarence Burroughs, he would drive, I'd give him five bucks. He drove it. He went to either Penn Station or Grand Central. Now, you got tickets to go in. I says, don't let the M.P. see you, or you're in trouble.

AL: I think that's a good place to stop.

JF: Okay. That's a good place to stop because it's got nothing to do with shoes.

AL: We will make plans -

JF: Aren't you sorry you came over?

AL: Not at all. No, we'll make plans to get back together again.

End of Interview

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