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DPACASS045A

I: This interview is with Ed Baas who was done on February 5, 1991. I visited Ed in his office on the second floor of Baas's Clothing Store. Ed is pushing 80 years old, and you'd never guess it as you'll notice on the conversation on the tape. Also, he's still very dapper in his dress. Toward the end of the tape he is talking about his days of travel and going to the various wholesale markets to get his clothing, and he mentions something about riding on the train, and then after it clicks off, he mentioned that suits in those days were \$35 with two pair of pants, and then Botany 500 introduced a suit which was \$50, and he took the plunge, and it was a great success for him, but to go from \$35 to \$50 was quite an undertaking back in the middle '40s. Let's pick up the interview.

R: Say, that's a great picture. I've never seen that. You took that?

R: Yeah, but, I snapped that off a boat one night while we were out on the river.

I: Now Construction Ag was going then, wasn't it?

R: Yeah.

I: Sure.

R: Well, no, this all belongs to...

I: Verplank.

R: Verplanks, whether they were there, it's a little vague to me now. Maybe, but no, I think Construction Aggregate has been out of there a long time

I: How long has it been?

R: Well...

I: Fifteen, ten years?

R: Boy, I don't know. I would think so.

I: These are all pictures you've taken?

R: Yeah.

I: This is great.

R: This is Cumberland Falls.

I: Oh.

R: In the fall of the year. This I snapped out of the, I had Margaret down to the beach one night last spring before she went to this Seville, and we watched a beautiful sunset that night, and as we were leaving, the lights went on, so I just said, “Op,” and stopped the car and...

I: That looks almost painted, doesn't it?

R: Yeah, you see those are two lights?

I: Yes, right. Definitely. Yeah, well you can see them separated good out here.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: Gee this is a beauty.

R: Pretty color. They did a good job of getting the color.

I: Oh, that's down at the Campbell plant.

R: I got those last, well, let's see, it was in early October. I went to one of Hadley's, the final tennis tournament down at Holland.

I: Oh yeah.

R: And it was on a Saturday morning, and it was foggy, and this was Port Sheldon...

I: Yeah, I see.

R: And I stopped and the sun is coming up there, see? There's a, it's up here...

I: You can see the reflection.

R: And, so I just stopped the car and took that, and I turned around, and you wouldn't believe, that's the same day at the same time.

I: Huh.

R: That's looking into the sun, and this is with the sun on the building over there.

I: Mm. That is gorgeous.

R: Yeah.

I: That looks like something out of the swamps of Southern Georgia.

R: Yeah, it does. Might be Oakey Pinochie or something.

I: When you say you just snapped that, that's pretty good composition. You like to get leaves and...

R: Yeah, I go for composition.

I: Yeah, I can see that.

R: Yeah. That's fun, and if they come out decently, I get 'em blown up. I got more of 'em at home.

I: Yeah.

R: I change 'em around. I gotta take all those home cause I've had them here a while.

I: Gotta keep 'em moving.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: What sort of equipment do you have? You've got, it isn't just a, you got a lens...

R: Nikon.

I: Yeah.

R: I have a lot of lens that go with it, but I only use one, the 30/70 zoom, and that gives you, [two talking], no, no, no, a zoom, a 30/70 is only about like that.

I: Okay, I don't know about it.

R: If you get a 70, you can get a 70 to 135, and that's about like that. If you want to go big, you know, if you want a telephoto 200 or 300 lens...

I: Yeah.

R: That's a long one. I don't. I had a long len, but I never use it. That's no use. I don't really have any use for it.

I: Yeah.

R: It's hard to lug around.

I: Yeah, you get...

R: And I've taken it on trips, and then I never used it. It's kind of fun to take out in the mountains, but it's not, well, it's, I don't take many pictures any more. I usually have a camera in my car and just, if I just see something I take it.

I: Mm eh. I have a PHD Camera, "Push here, dummy." [Laughing] You know about that one?

R: No.

I: They're pretty good. They do anything that I want.

R: Woe, this is a nice sort. I put it on, I don't try to be fancy.

I: Put it on automatic?

R: I put it on the automatic mode.

I: Uh eh.

R: And the only thing I do is adjust the distance. Otherwise, it's automatic. It takes, on the automatic mode, it has all these other modes on it...

I: Yes.

R: But I just bypass those.

I: Yeah.

R: It takes everything, all but your distance. In other words, the light is prefigured, and there's shutter speed, all in accordance with the light and all that. Like what you are talking about. And I do have the distance adjuster because on those cameras that are automatic adjustment, they go in kind of pieces, not real, they maybe go in maybe 20 degrees or something like that, 20s instead of, you can get finer than that.

I: You know the thing that always amazed me, and I bet your dad had a camera like this. The cameras that they used to take pictures in the olden days, they were just pinhole cameras, but the distance was indefinite, infinity...

R: Infinity.

I: And you could see the cow in the field ½ mile away just as easy as you could see the cow here.

R: Yeah.

I: Beautiful pictures.

R: You know, none of those were adjustable. You just snapped ‘em.

I: Absolutely. Your dad probably had some like that?

R: Well, my father never had one, but my older brothers did. I’m the youngest of the bunch. I had four brothers.

I: No girls?

R: Oh, yes, I had four sisters, too.

I: Were you born here?

R: No, no, in Grand Rapids, and I was the youngest. When I came along and I was the big mistake of the family...

I: [Laughter]

R: But my brothers, they had cameras and but, you know, they were those old black Kodak things. Some of ‘em were just boxes and...

I: Look into the glass there...

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

R: And I know one brother had one of these fancy ones you opened up, and it was on kind of a gadget, you know...

I: Oh yeah.

R: With the bellows...

I: The accordion deal.

R: Yeah, that was the epitome.

I: The door went down, and that slid out on the...

R: Yeah.

I: The front.

R: That’s right.

I: Remember those. When did you come here then?

R: 1940.

I: Okay.

R: February of 1940.

I: Just before the war started.

R: Yeah, by golly, I'm gonna have an anniversary. [Both talking] No, no, no. I came on the 12th of February in 1940.

I: Oh, I see, so it'll be 51 years?

R: Yes.

I: Fifty-one years.

R: Which was Lincoln's birthday.

I: Uh eh.

R: And my first day at work I had off. [Laughter]

I: You worked at the bank?

R: I started at the People's Bank.

I: Ted Bolt was there then?

R: Yes. He was President, CEO, he was the works.

I: Uh eh. Now who did he follow? Who had preceded him?

R: Well, I really wouldn't know. I'm really not sure who it was, John somebody, but I never met him, and Ted had been in the bank quite sometime by the time I came because Ted, my goodness, he was my senior by, let's see, 1940, at that time I was 29, and so he came as my senior by quite a bit. I'd say Ted's been gone for 15 years, and 15 years, he was 75, so he was 90, and 15..

I: When he died he was 90?

R: No, he was 75 when he died in 1976. I remember we were on a trip, and heard of it when we were on a trip. I wasn't at the bank at that time, but I remember his passing.

I: So it would have been, he was 36 your senior?

R: He was, no, no, he died in '76, and he was 75 years old when he died.

I: So he was 34 when you came there?

R: Yeah.

I: You were 29?

R: Well, no in '70.

I: In 40?

R: Yeah, yeah in 40, I was, in 1940 I was 29.

I: Now was Ken Sheppers there?

R: No, no. Ken followed Ted. I think Sheppers was in there before...

I: Yes, he was.

R: Before Ted passed away.

I: Yeah, true.

R: But I didn't know him before that because they had taken over Spring Lake bank.

I: That's right. Ken had been the President of that bank over there, hadn't he?

R: Yeah.

I: I'd forgotten that.

R: Yeah.

I: The Spring Lake Bank was a separate bank, wasn't it?

R: Yes. Harvey Scholten's father ran that.

I: Oh that's right, years, yeah.

R: Until Frank retired. I don't think he, he passed away. [Trails off, can't here]

I: Well, you didn't say, how did you ever go into banking? Did you graduate in economics or...?

R: No, I never had any much formal education. When I was in the bank, I took some courses for two years...

I: Yeah, yeah.

R: But up until that time, I was a product of the Depression. When I graduated from high school, I had to go to work.

I: Yeah.

R: I had intended to enroll at, so many kids in Grand Rapids went to Junior College, and I was going to enroll in Junior College in 1929, and, but then I thought I would work another year to get some money 'cause I graduated in June, and...

I: What high school?

R: Preston High School.

I: Okay.

R: And so I stayed on and then the Depression came, and you know, the big stock market crash in 29th of October...

I: Yeah, you were caught in the crunch there, weren't you?

R: Yes, yes, and so I didn't, and then things worsened...

I: Mm eh.

R: And, why I don't, I had a few kind of native skills, and so I applied at the Consumer's Energy, and I was working at Steketee's.

I: I'll be darned. What? Clerking?

R: Yes, in the men's department 'cause I had graduated in January. At that time, if you had enough credits, you could go out and get a job and graduate with your class in June with all the ceremonies and everything.

I: Sure thing, sure.

R: So I went to work there, and then when this hit, I thought, "Well, I better get someplace that's gonna be in business for a long time 'cause I figured that they were gonna need electricity around here..."

I: Sure.

R: More than they are clothing, so I got a job in the accounting department there, and I worked there for nine years.

I: So that got you into the...

R: Yes, and I took some courses in accounting and that sort of thing, but the accounting was very simple, and the utilities at that time...

I: Uh eh.

R: But, anyway, you know, they had a big order book, and we went by the books, and it was pretty simple, utilities, but then I had an opportunity to go up north in 1936...

I: With Consumers?

R: No, with the Northern Power Company to run their accounting department. It was called an accounting department. What it was was just a billing department, and a meter reading, and a few other things that came on all combined, and then your billing and all the bookwork on that, of course, and your cashiers department, you're depositing, all the financial end of it except the main office was in Jackson so there was nothing really complicated about it.

I: Well now, you're talking about Consumers now?

R: Yeah.

I: But the Northern...?

R: The northern was Northern Lighting. That was, Northern Light was a utility that served Traverse City and everything up there, that later became Consumers.

I: Yeah.

R: That would have been, then an opening at the bank came at the same time, and so I, Margaret was in Grand Haven, you know.

I: Sure. She was when Dornbos's [inaudible]?

R: Yes, so we decided to come down here, and that's how, then I was there three years before this opened up here.

I: It did?

R: The VandenBosch store.

I: '43 that would have been?

R: Mm eh.

I: Now, this is when it was, it wrapped around the corner then, did it, and it was a wooden building? I've seen the pictures of it, but I...

R: Yes. I have pictures of it downstairs in a lower level?

I: Maybe that's where I've seen them.

R: Oh, could be, could be.

I: Sure, but it went along the street and down the...

R: Yes, it covered exactly; this was the end of their building the same as this one except that we added this edition on...

I: Yeah.

R: But the original building that I built, we tore down the old one, you see?

I: Uh eh.

R: And built it on the same lot, except, instead of, that was a 90 foot wooden building facing Third Street...

I: Uh eh.

R: And we rebuilt a 46 foot building, 46 wide because the original store was only 24. There were four stores in it that old brick house, that old...

I: Yes, right.

R: And the so called Big Store. That was run by the VandenBosch family, occupied the corner, 24 feet, and they had a little stock room back in another store there, but we tore the whole thing down and rebuilt a 46 by 90 building, see one story, and then we added this in 1970.

I: That's right. It was just one story. I forget that. Now when I remember it, was it the A & P, what food store was right next door here?

R: Yes, the A& P That...

I: They had torn apparently a section of the wooden stores down, and...

R: Well, what happened, I bought the business from VanderBosch, and then a few years, I've forgotten exactly, but a few years later, I bought the building, and then in 1949, maybe '48, but anyway, in '49, the A & P came to me, and they were located on Second Street...

I: Mm eh.

R: And they had lost their lease, I don't know, I've forgotten some of the details...

I: That's in behind Mulder's?

R: Yes. They needed more space. They needed parking and that sort of thing, and of course, the property I had went beyond the building...

I: Mm eh.

R: And as a matter of fact, I remember the Sherwoods had that little piece of property beyond my wooden building, and it was vacant, and that's what interested the A & P Store, and the Sherwoods had offered that to me a few years after I was in business, and of course, I bought it.

I: Oh.

R: And then, it was a vacant piece, so A & P saw that. I never knew they were interested. They came in to see me, and I said, "Well, yes, I am interesting in building for you, what, we talked about details and all that sort of thing, so of course, I had to go to the bank.

I: Back to your buddies, huh? [Laughter]

R: Naturally. That's what banks are for. They can't pay the depositors unless they have...

I: You're right.

R: Well, anyway, that's how that, so I built that building for them and leased it, and then of course, the development out on the highway came in.

I Okay, that's...

R: Jim VanZylen, maybe not...

I: Yep.

R: A & P...

I: That's right.

R: And their lease was up within a year of that time, and they thought that they better get close to Meijers. It would be better for them than down here, and I think for the manager over there and some of the other people it was kind of a doubtful thing to do...

I: As it turned out.

R: Because they had a very business here.

I: Sure.

R: But they moved out, and they were soon moved out up there as well, but I think A & P was [trails off, can't hear]

I: True, that's right.

R: They were just kind of in the air over there, in that situation, they had had some problems and markups, and I think that they were getting very closely scrutinized by the government at that time...

I: Mm.

R: Nothing criminal, but...

I: Monopoly type thing?

R: But yeah, and I guess somewhat [inaudible]

I: I've forgotten about the details. I do remember that.

R: I have, too, but anyway, they moved out, and then I rented it for storage for a few years. Well, anyway, when I built that building, the agreement was they'd have parking spaces, and that's what, that's why I had to tear this building down, so I tore it down and we had this parking space inbetween the two stores.

I: It was a common parking space then?

R: Yeah, and it's still there.

I: Sure.

R: It's the same business, but it was all on an angle, and it went back to, and then, you know, back in the '40s, there wasn't that much traffic...

I: Mm eh.

R: Very few people had two automobiles.

I: Yeah, sure.

R: And a lot of people walked.

I: Yep, sure.

R: And so there wasn't that kind of demand, but within a few years they wanted more space, and then I was able to buy property behind the store from a Mrs. Thompson. She had a home there...

I: And you took the home down?

R: And they wanted to get a smaller home. They were getting older, and I didn't tear it down because they had a lot of, the home was so situated on a very large lot that I had about 50 feet more of parking that I could give them plus about, considerably more behind the house 'cause the property lot went back rather far, and that satisfied them for a while, and then, of course, eventually, I had to tear that down, and then there was another house next to that, beyond that that I was able to get later on.

I: So you had that...

R: The strange thing is, and I've thought about this so often, I really wasn't very aggressive to get this property. People wanted to get rid of property at that time.

I: Yeah.

R: And they came to you.

I: You were a logical buyer.

R: Yes, I was the logical buyer because the pieces were contiguous...

I: Uh eh.

R: I guess I was a natural one for them to come to when they wanted to get rid of it, so that's how it happened.

I: Now these houses down here, or buildings I should say, the Chronicle and Peter Coals, they were the original buildings, and they're still...?

R: Yes.

I: They weren't part of your operation?

R: No.

I: They were separate?

R: They were separate.

I: I remember John VanSchelven talked about a filling station on the corner beyond Coal's right there.

R: Yes, there was one there.

I: Yeah.

R: And when I came there, it was not a filling station any more, but it was a chap that did outboard motor repairs.

I: Oh, yeah.

R: It was a repair shop. I was able to buy that building where the Chronicle is, I've forgotten when, but it in the '60s or '50s or something.

I: You had a pretty good hold on the whole block?

R: Well, I don't know. It just evolved that way. I didn't have any, I guess I didn't have any grand plan for doing this or anything, but it just, by the grace of God, it goes that way.

I: You've got to be the Dean of the Retailers in town right now. Henry Koiman is gone.

R: Yes.

I: Well, he's still living, but I mean, he's out of business...

R: Yes.

I: And even if Jack Reichardt was around, I think you've got him by...

R: Well, if he was still in business, I think Jack was in, his father was in business when I came...

I: True.

R: Jack started very, quite soon after that.

I: Uh eh.

R: Jack's a little younger.

I: Yes, right.

R: I don't know of any other active retailer.

I: No, I don't think so.

R: Of course, I'm not very active either. [Laughter]

I: Well, you're doing well. [Laughing]

R: That's how, you see, my son is so good to me, he let's me have an office.

I: This is great. Isn't it perfect though?

R: Yeah. Well, I really appreciate it because I like people. I like all the people that I associate with here at the store.

I: Sure.

R: Some of whom I've know for many, many years now, and it's always, I can't remember a day when I didn't want to come to the office or come to work.

I: That's great.

R: Of course, years ago, you didn't come down to the office. You came down to the store to work.

I: You bet. You probably didn't have an office.

R: No, I had to, right out on the selling floor, I had a desk, so I faced the door, and when they came in, I was up off the desk.

I: Now what did VandenBosch sell? Was it a general type store?

R: No, no, no. It was clothing, men's clothing. Now prior to that, I think there were some other stores. There were four of those as I said, and there were some other things, I wasn't around at that time. At the time I came, they had this corner 24 feet, and the next door it was a hat shop, women's hat shop, and beyond that, I think at that time, Claude VerDuin was in there, in the third building, and the fourth one was John Claver's Market.

I: Okay, I've heard of that, but I...

R: And across the street, of course, none of those buildings are there. The Tribune was there, but next to that there were some houses, and there was a couple of older store

buildings down that way, but when Porenta came, I think, in, oh boy, when was that, that had to be in the late '40s.

I: Mm eh.

R: They started to build over there when I was still in the old store, so I think, in the late '40s.

I: You built, you said the old store. You built this the first floor...

R: When I say the old store, I mean the wooden one.

I: Yes, right.

R: Yeah.

I: When you rebuilt, that had to have been after I arrived in '55.

R: I built it '50.

I: Oh, '50? Okay, then, it was before I got here. I guess maybe I'm thinking when you put the other story on. That was it.

R: That was '70.

I: Mm eh, yeah.

R: I built the first floor with foundations and walls to carry a second story.

I: Uh eh. You know, all I can think of is the interurban that ran by here, and made this quite a thoroughfare one time.

R: Mm eh.

I: And I have to think that the interurban played a part in your love affair here in Grand Haven. Did you ever use it in the '20s to...?

R: When I lived in Grand Rapids? Sure I did. Oh yes, but you know, I was, I think the railway went out in about 1900, something like that, 1919. 1919? Something like that, at least early '20s.

I: Yes, it would have been. I think it was still going in '27 but struggling. I may have the dates wrong, but you're about right.

R: Well, I remember, of course, coming down with my parents on the interurban. Oh yes, and that was a big thrill.

I: And you'd come right down Third Street here. You were heading off to The Oval or off to the beach?

R: Oh yes, and sometimes we'd get off at Spring Lake, where my parents had some friends at Strawberry Point.

I: Oh yes.

R: A popular place, summer cottages at that time. I presume at that time, I don't exactly remember. I was a little boy then. I presume they were just for summer use. And later on they were winterized. In fact there were very few homes on Spring Lake.

I: Mm eh. When you stop and think about it, the mass transit system that was developed then, how far did your parents live or how far did you live as a child from the interurban track? Probably didn't have to walk very far.

R: Well, we had to take a streetcar downtown.

I: Oh, okay, but there again, there's the mass transit.

R: Oh, yes, but I lived in the north end of town. Preston High School had a streetcar go right by on the Plainfield, and we lived up on the hill, and we had a spur, and they called it the Carrier Street Spur that came up and stopped right at Kent Country Club.

I: Oh sure.

R: I lived about two blocks from Kent Country Club, and that's where the carrier line ended, and that was only, actually, it was only a block from our house so that's what we rode to get downtown.

I: So you could walk a block with your suitcases, and go all the way to Chicago if you'd care to?

R: Sure, sure.

I: Pretty amazing when you stop and think about it.

R: Yeah, oh, transportation was, after all, when I was a boy, my brothers had a car, but my parents never had a car.

I: Uh eh.

R: And transportation was extremely important. If we didn't have a streetcar, you were lost. You just walked, and even the kids, lots of times we'd saunter along and walk downtown from the north end of town. That was a great adventure.

I: And that's mild.

R: I'm gonna be 80 in a couple months, so I'm talking 70 years ago.

I: Yeah sure, as youngster, sure. You had some great sliding hills around there.

R: Indeed we did. Of course, Kent Country Club, the sixth and seventh holes were great. You know, we had...

I: And they let you go on it?

R: Oh, yes. The pond was there. We used to go down the sixth, off the sixth tee, and it was a big jump off that. There was a hill behind it, and then it flattened out, and the tee was there, and then it went way down to the pond. It's still there. It's exactly as it was, and I've played that course once a year with the Wolverine Seniors.

I: Oh yes.

R: And of course, I'm reminded of my childhood, but they haven't changed that one bit.

I: Was that a skating pond as well?

R: Well, they didn't make it as such. It froze over, but they didn't use it as such.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

R: Skating in those days was flooded like most, they flooded parks in Grand Rapids, and that sort of thing. There was one in Creston, Creston Pond we called it. That froze over, and we used it for skating, but we didn't always have the best of skating there. I think it was sort of spring fed, and the ice, they watched it very closely.

I: Sure, spring fed, then that would tend to deteriorate the ice.

R: Oh, this is true.

I: When you came here as a youngster, you were what? Ten years old or twelve years old?

R: Yeah, oh younger than that. I was maybe, and of course, the interurban didn't run very many years.

I: It didn't?

R: No.

I: It came here in 1903, got over here...

R: Okay.

I: Maybe 20 years.

R: Twenty years, I think, something like that. Well, I can, we rode the interurban as far back as I can remember, and I can remember coming down there when I was four or five years old with my parents, and we'd even take the interurban and go fishing. Fishing with my father on the pier.

I: Uh. Down here at this pier?

R: Yes, an old rickety bridge coming across the river.

I: Yeah, that thing lasted, well '22, is when the old swing bridge went in, and then '59 is when the present bridge went in. I'll bet you knew, or at least your dad knew what the schedule was of that interurban. People had to be...

R: Oh sure.

I: Very aware.

R: Oh sure.

I: You missed the interurban, you...

R: You never took it in the winter. Travel was a little uncertain in the winter time because of snow and that sort of thing; they had to keep that third rail clear.

I: That's right.

R: But in the summers very popular.

I: Do you ever remember anyone being hurt on the third rail? I remember as kids we talked about the third rail, you go near that and you were dead.

R: No, I can't say as I ever remember anybody...

I: But it was open?

R: Oh yes.

I: Wouldn't be allowed today.

R: No, I'm sure it wouldn't. Too many irresponsible people. We were very responsible in those days. [laughing]

I: [Laughing] Yeah, right. Just think of that though. That was a hot rail.

R: Yeah, and I guess it was possible to be electrocuted.

I: I suspect it was. It was direct current, but even then, it didn't make any difference.

R: I don't know how many...

I: What the voltage was or anything like that. I guess you'd have to just standing on the ground, or ground yourself, that's all it would take.

R: I suppose if you'd jump on it, it wouldn't do anything. That'd ground it. You'd ground yourself.

I: That's right, exactly.

R: I don't ever remember being cautioned about it.

I: Yeah.

R: 'Cause I think through town it was overhead.

I: Right. Well, when you started the store when you came here in '43...

R: Mm eh.

I: The store had been started before that, how many clothing stores were there? I know you mentioned Reichardt had one...

R: Well, yes, and there was Keift Brothers...

I: Yes, okay.

R: And there was Bill Viening, and there was another clothing store, Waltons, I think it was, or Lawsons.

I: On Washington?

R: On Washington Street next to Henry Kooiman's I think it was, Lawsons. I think that was, for a while, I think after I started, there was also one, trying to think, VanDyke, the young chap that started it was VanDyke, and that was just west of, at that time, Mulder's Drug Store.

I: Mm eh.

R: But that wasn't in there for very long, but Vienings was there. He'd been there a long, well, I don't know how long, but he was well established, when I came down here, and of course, Reichardts.

I: Yes.

R: I'm not sure Reichardts were in the clothing business in '43. I don't know. I think they were.

I: Uh eh.

R: I think they were. I think they were.

I: The stationery business is where he got his start though, isn't it?

R: Yes, and of course, he was famous for his gift shop.

I: Oh, gifts, okay.

R: And then there was the Abigail, women's clothing, and the Style Shop, and of course, there was Addisons. Now Addisons got some men's wear, too, department store type, and down the other block was I think, Keifts, I'm a little bit vague on that.

I: I think they were on this side of the street.

R: Well, yes, but I think they moved over there because they had, they lost their lease and they had to get out, and John was gonna take that over, Reichardts, you see?

I: Oh, okay, so it would have been right along there?

R: I think Reichardts going into business precipitated Keifts moving across the street...

I: Okay.

R: As I recall. I'm a little bit vague on my dates here.

I: What Keift was that? Not Bud...

R: Well, Bud, well, Budge's father was Bud also.

I: Also, okay, alright.

R: And his brother. His name was Fes, F-e-s. That was a nickname.

I: Fes Keift?

R: Yes, Fes Keift. You've maybe heard that, read that in your history books.

I: Gee, I don't know if I have.

R: They were brothers. Now the Enterprise Company, they weren't in business at that time, and...

I: How about Seventh Street?

R: Well, let's see, Seventh Street, did they have a clothing store up there? I don't recall. At the time there was a shoe store there.

I: Uh eh.

R: I'm trying to place a clothing store up there, but I don't think there was.

I: Really, this was off the beaten path. When the interurban came by here, this was just an extension of a main street really 'cause it turned right up there, and...

R: I'm not even sure where the interurban went any more. It went right down...

I: Yeah, I don't know where. I've seen maps of it.

R: But I'm sure it came across the river where the bridges are and then came down alongside the channel, and then Third Street.

I: Yeah, but that made this a rather main street here.

R: Yes, as I say, there were buildings across the street. There was buildings over there next to the library.

I: That's right. The library was there.

R: And of course, Thielemans was here, and the gas station was here at that time.

I: The Standard?

R: Yes.

I: Gosh, it's gone now isn't it?

R: Yes.

I: I walked by it so many times, I'd forgotten it's gone. Well, you weren't selling spats when you got started but things sure changed.

R: Well, listen, we were selling collar buttons and separate collars.

I: Is that right?

R: Sure. We had a stock of Vanheusen collars

I: Yeah?

R: Of course, sport shirts were just coming in. Knit shirts, we called 'em polo shirts.

I: Yep.

R: They were coming in. They came in in the late '30s.

I: Mm eh.

R: Could be the early '30s when we were still playing golf in knickers.

I: Oh, is that right?

R: Oh yes, very popular.

I: Well, you got your taste for clothing when you were working at Steketee's. I suspect?

R: Well, perhaps, I always enjoyed clothing, so it was a natural thing for me, and so when this became available, I was immediately enthused about it, and I didn't know much about it, but, [inaudible] not much of a contribution to skill, I guess, at that time, so...

I: Sure, not from buying.

R: I guess you naturally, you have a color sense and [inaudible], to me what it takes is to enjoy people.

I: Yeah, personality.

R: And I've always enjoyed people. It was a real challenge today. I enjoy every bit of it. I learned a lot. A lot of people have taught me things. The inventory in '43 was very low. We hadn't recovered from the Depression yet really.

I: Mm eh.

R: And the war of course, had started, and all the manufacturing was going into war material and clothing.

I: Sure.

R: And there was a great scarcity, and fortunately, I will say that war is a bad thing, and I'm a peace loving person, but those circumstances were fortunate because I went out and I searched for goods. I went to Chicago. I went to wholesale markets in Chicago, St. Louis and Nashville, Cincinnati, and just to get goods because they were so scarce, and the people from whom I purchased it were older, and didn't have that energy to do that sort of thing, and I was young...

I: Sure.

R: And I learned so much.

I: And you had a ready market here.

R: Yes, yes, because the reputation of the store was there, and I was just trying to find goods to serve the customers.

I: Mm eh.

R: Everybody was having the problem, and I spent a lot of time, my wife brought up our kids when I first went into business because I was on the road an awful lot, and I had people like Dick Boon.

I: Oh sure.

R: And when I was gone so much, he was running the business, and he meant a lot to me. I was very grateful for his being able to help me.

I: This would be Moon's dad?

R: Father, yes. I worked for him 'til he retired, so I was able to get out because he knew everybody in town, and he was a very personable fellow...

I: Yeah.

R: And extremely reliable, and so I was very fortunate in that respect to have somebody there while I was gone, and I was gone a lot, just trying to get merchandise.

I: Isn't that something though?

R: Yeah. Can't get on a train here and go to Chicago and work the Franklin Street Wholesale Line, and I go to the Merchandise Mart, and I got to know a lot of people there that really helped me with the retail business. There's a fine gentleman, wonderful, representatives from clothing companies.

I: Mm eh.

R: And I owe them a lot as well, but then I'd get on a train and go to St. Louis, overnight to St. Louis, and there was a big wholesale market in St. Louis. You know, back in those days, there were many, many items that you could not buy direct from the factory. They were wholesale. Wholesaling was a big business back in the, well up until the '60s, it was very big, and so there were a lot of wholesalers in Chicago, and from St. Louis, I used to go to Nashville, sleep there and go to Nashville, and there was another big wholesale market. A lot of cotton goods were made there, a lot of work clothes, a lot of underwear, and all that sort of thing, and you see, all those things were through wholesalers, and then Cincinnati had a fairly big market, but I didn't spend too much time there, but those three, Chicago, St. Louis and Nashville, and then of course, I went to New York once a month.

I: Once a month?

R: Oh yes. You know, it was hard to get a first class...[end of recording]