

# The Coming of Age of the Boy Jeweler

*The Memoirs of Edward William Weintraut*



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*Reported to and transcribed by  
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At the age of seventeen my mother, Cecilia, came from Czechoslovakia to USA via Ellis Island with three brothers. They went their separate ways to find jobs: the brothers to Philadelphia, and Mom took the train to Williamsport, PA, to be a housegirl for the owner of a large store in town.

My Dad, Edward Aloysius, was born in Jedd, PA as were his other family members. His family roots were in Germany. Everyone in his family was Catholic. As a youth, Dad was expected to become a priest, but nothing ever came of this. After Mom and Dad married, they spent their early years living in quarters above a garage. Later they came to South Philadelphia to set up a home.

When Mom was approached wrongly by a young parish priest, Dad became furious, left the parish and moved with his wife to West Philadelphia. After this incident he never had any contact with the Catholic church except when I and my sister were christened at Our Lady of the Rosary Church at North 63rd Street.

Our new home on North 62nd Street worked out well. My sister Leona was born on Christmas Day, 1926, and then Little Edward on 19 February 1928, fourteen months apart. Family later told me Dad especially loved his daughter and due to the Depression he did not look forward to another child. I was his unwanted boy. He wanted no more children after me. Growing up I always had a sister to play with finding adventure in our home.

Dad worked for the Philadelphia Board of Education, a position he held until his death. He had passed the certification test for the steam fitters engineer to get the job. In time he became a foreman with several workers under his supervision. His was responsible for maintaining and installing all heater units in Philadelphia schools. These constantly needed repair. Working for 22 years around asbestos (up at 6 and home by 4:30), combined with his habit of smoking three cigarette packs every day, finally led to his death.

My first vivid memory is getting my leg broken outside my home on the sidewalk by a neighbor on rollerskates. She fell on me. I remember lying on the old couch in the parlor for a few months, and walking with a cane.

My second memory: My Dad purchased the home at 34 North 62nd Street. He was able to get a mortgage because of his job and his assets in the Teacher's Credit Union.

In addition to his five-day work-week, Dad would get all dressed up to visit antique stores in search of clocks to repair. This was his hobby. I remember as a boy I had to sit at kitchen table across from Dad, watching and learning time fundamentals. I learned mechanics and how to use cleaning solutions (benzine).

We repaired a lot of Big Ben alarm clocks, which needed attention after four or five years. I forget for sure, but Big Bens probably sold for \$3.95 and cost about \$1.00 to be repaired, and \$1.50 to be restored good as new. From antique stores came the influx of

French clocks and Ansonia and Ingram USA and Seth Thomas. So, over the years Dad would bring home clocks to repair and would then deliver them to their owners. Finally, later on he began working on grandfather clocks, which were of course much more difficult to repair. Only the well-to-do had such time pieces. The car dealerships on automobile row on Chestnut and Walnut at 40th Street had well-to-do customers, and here they were introduced to my father's workmanship. Dad was often asked to come to their homes on City Line Avenue to repair fancy grandfather clocks. He never had a car until late in life so we always took the trolley or bus. He took me with him to help carry tools. I was amazed to see such beautiful homes and lavish furnishings. We would remove the clock movement and box it up to carry home and repair. Some had 6 to 8 tubes for sound in the case, approximately 6' to 7' high, and we left them with the owners until we had repaired the clock. Probably after running as much as 15 years, they needed special cleaning and oiling. We would hang the clock on a holder in the dining room to check the running and the regulation. The pendulum was usually four feet tall and I had to carry it. Dad was strict, and I was warned many times: "Don't do this!" and "Don't do that!" when we were working. This happened approximately when I was between 9 and 14 years of age.

After Dad's day at work he would nap each night on the sofa for one or two hours. He paid strict attention to me. He wanted to get up at a certain time to hear Amos and Andy on the radio every night. I fixed clocks approximately until 10 pm, so I had to sit with him and scrub and clean wheels with pumice (white powder) and hot water in the sink. God help me if he found any leftover pumice on the parts! Dad was very strict with me, giving me commands and never a hug or a kiss. He was a good provider, working all day and then at home. As I was growing up, I was scared of talking back. I started to stutter when I was 9 years old and carried it with my speech until I was 13 or 14.

I was never hit by Mom or Dad. They used to chase my sister around the house to crack her with a newspaper or something similar for not paying attention and for coming home late. Night work increased as Dad met the classy customers and brought home more antiques to work on. He would buy an expensive vase or figure from France and elsewhere, then convert them into a lamp with a hand-made brass base and fancy pipes up the back and socket and shade holder. Most vases needed a hole cut through the bottom, and I was the assistant. Because of this work we used caustic soda, sulfuric acid, and nitric acid. These were held in crock pots to take off the lacquer and clean the brass parts for a fine finish. Polish machines, drill press, etc were used to do this work and over the years a large collection of brass parts for this work to drill the hole in the vase. He would use a special brass or copper tube and pressure it into the china while I kept cold water and emery powder fed into the item. I heard a few extra curse **words** form time to time as his temper was up because I was not fast enough. As the drill bit reached the very last cut through, extreme care was needed. One could not bend the vase or tilt it because it would crack and break. And sometimes I was holding an item (God forbid that I should ever do something wrong!). After the job was done and the base was hard, I painted the item with rose-tint lacquer that kept the item from tarnishing for many years.

Working around all those chemicals as a youth, I'm amazed that it did not ruin my health. I never smoked. When making bases of brass I needed to hold the parts together. Dad would solder them together permanently. Many times I would see my finger burning ("Don't be a baby!", he would say). Many nights I would be up to 11:30 or midnight, and Mom would come down and say "Let the kid go to bed!"

The experience of mechanical repairs, restoring and improving antiques, and filling orders, certainly prepared me for work and helped me throughout my life. At school, my stuttering was always a stumbling block, but I always did my homework. When they called upon the class to stand up and read their work, I was scared to death because I would probably stutter and feel foolish. At public school they had a speech class with about eight other students who also stuttered. We were all excused during art class and were allowed to go to speech class for one hour. Of these kids I at least spoke the best (when there was no pressure!). The others were simply awful. It was a shame. The class did help me learn to breathe properly and to talk slower. It was advertised in magazines. "Come to us if you stutter and go home a free person!" I contemplated so hard to do this, I would have had to go to Ohio for a one-week course (with admission charges for classes and room and board), but I never went.

When I was ten years old I started delivering goods from the corner American store with my wagon. In those days they did have the Acme super store at 60th and Market. The American store was at 62nd and Market, near where I lived. After a while I was allowed to work in the store when not delivering groceries. For a "small" fee they had me sweeping, washing down the shelves, taking stock. I loved waiting on people. They would have a list and stand at the counter, and we would fill their order by taking things off the shelves. I finally found that I liked talking to people. Gradually, my fright disappeared and I stopped stuttering. It took a while, but my experience at the store cured me. I loved to grind the coffee. Such a great aroma!

The manager said: "When you pour the beans into the grinder, take out 8 or 10 beans and put them in a can." Probably after a week or so we had saved an entire pound of coffee! This trick was to make up for all of the cookies and fruit the customers sampled while waiting for their order to be filled.

A lot of food in the store was sold out of open boxes; we sold food by the pound. One time I had to squeal on one of our better customers. I watched him put four eggs in his





pants pocket. I told the boss what I had seen, and he confronted the customer as he was about to leave the store. As he said good-bye to the customer, he slapped his pocket and the eggs were smashed.

I was still in school when I had this job. I worked from roughly 3:30 or 4:00 to 6:00. Wednesday nights I stayed sometimes until 9 pm. And all day Saturday from 9 til 5. At night I did schoolwork or helped Dad with his work. The grocery store was full of smells and aromas from so many exposed foods. We sold salted mackerel fish in a wooden tub sitting on the floor. Because of the sweeping, dust would get into the tub and form scum on the fish. I was told to skim off all of the dust and then turn the fish over! Certain vegetables were soaked in a bucket of water every morning to make them look fresher. One of my favorite duties was to weigh the lard, We would get 30-pounds of lard in a metal container. I had to take out one pound of lard and place it in a cardboard box, cover it in a foil wrap, and put it in the freezer. I used a standard metal scale. To balance it you put a one-pound weight on one side and the box on the other. After four or five attempts I could easily guess how much lard I needed to put in the box, give or take an ounce or two. The boss who checked the merchandise said I did this duty well.

Since these were war times, food had to be rationed, and people bought food with ration coupons. It was especially hard to get butter. In bad times our order would come in boxes of four quarter-pounds. We opened all the boxes and stacked them in the freezer. If a customer bought food she could have 1/4 pound with a coupon; with a big food order you would get 1/2 pound okayed by the boss. Occasionally the food truck would come and the driver would offer a deal due to an extra-sized load and sold us 2-25 boxes for \$25—a real deal! He was actually called the Hot Butter Driver; he made a nice profit. There was never a payment for regular deliveries. The manager came out ahead selling it making it for customer stealing.

One special married woman always got 1/2 pound butter. I was in the backroom stacking cereal boxes really high and could see straight to the front. I watched how the boss got a good feel job with his zipper open, standing between the counters. I guess I was 14 at the time. I tried dating her daughter once in a while.

The boss hired extra help—a sixteen-year-old from the neighborhood—and I had to keep an eye on him. I had to report how he did not ring up some sales and how he helped himself to cigarettes. I had to tell the boss to get rid of the kid. Never in the store or at any time in life did I feel the urge to steal cheat, take any kind of item, including cash. I must have been born with this trait and many other good traits.

The store had a cat to catch mice. Somehow it got pregnant and had three kittens. None of the customers wanted them, and I already had a super-sized black cat at home called Putt Putt. She roamed the alleys all day long but was always at the front door at dark to get fed well. The boss told me he was sorry: he put each of the cats into the toilet and waited until they died, then he put them in a box that disappeared. I guess the mother was looking for her babies.

On the last day of school one year I had to play baseball during gym period. The schoolyard was concrete and very smooth and shiny. I made a good hit, slid into second, but broke my arm. It just bent in half and they rushed me to Misericordia Hospital. The intern told me: "Son, you have a greenstick fracture, so grit your teeth." He put my arm on his knee. He pushed as I screamed until he got it straightened out. He put it in a cast for my entire summer vacation. It finally healed, but even today when I look at my arm I can see that it is slightly curved. I could not work for four to six weeks; I spent my time sitting on the front porch, carving animals out of bars of soap. Also, my favorite hobby was making flyable airplanes out of balsa wood and colored paper. The propeller turned with a rubber band.

My favorite store was Sears and Roebuck. At Christmas time I loved trains. Then I wanted a two-wheeler red bike so bad. I mentioned it to Dad.

The money I made at the store was always brought home, and I laid it on the table. I could keep the small change for an ice cream or an airplane kit. As usual, my Dad would spend in on Saturday at antique stores. He would bring home repairs and buying clocks and French brass pieces for his collection to repair and sell (or keep). He came home early one evening and told me he had something for me out on the porch. Oh my God! A real bicycle! I was flabbergasted and absolutely thrilled to finally own a bike. Most bikes had a 24" wheel. But this was an antique bike. After looking it over I saw that it had a 28" wheel and thin tires—nothing like the balloon tires on the Sears bike. I could have bought a Sears bike for \$1 a month over time. This one was a little tall for me. I adjusted the seat and spent many a summer day stripping it all apart and cleaning and re-greasing the bearing. Not knowing better, I used a heavy grease, and this made it harder to pedal. I biked all over West Philly and got plenty of exercise. My boy friends liked their standard bikes better.

Every two weeks Dad received his pay check. Money was so important to us. My parents rented out one bedroom to take in a little more cash. We had three bedrooms., My sister and I in one; Mom and Dad in one; and one bathroom.

I remember his name was Mr Hammel. He owned a coal yard at 63rd and Cobb Creek Park. The Park had space in it for a lumber yard, a coal yard, and several train tracks. The trains never crossed Market Street; they headed only south from the Park. I always wondered why Hammel was so cheap. He rented just one room and ate out. Where was his family?

On Market Street and 62nd Street was a toy store, packed to the hilt with toys. I spent many an hour looking through the window, hoping to get something. One day Hammel saw me looking through the window at a special wagon with wood paneling on the side. We discussed its beauty. Three or four weeks later he came up the street with the red and green wagon and said it was a gift because I was such a nice young boy. I guess I was about 12. What a thrill!

One day, he told me that I would be President! I always thought about that, but I only ended up being the president of my own corporation.

I was always busy at school and at work. I miss remembering my life with my sister Leona. At times we did play together in the back yards. Also, on the weekends we made a tent in the back yard: a blanket held with a rope from our fence. On hot days we would go swimming in the back yard. Big deal. We had a 36" round metal tub we filled with water from a good spray hose. I had two boy friends: Peter Mocca and Skinny George, a small kid. We spent time together with Leona and her friend.

The local electric trolley circled our block, down our street around Market and up 63rd. In those days we could go anywhere in the city using trolley fare and pass tokens (two hours for 15 cents). The elevated train ran down Market from 69th to 30th and then underground through the city. To get on the train one had to go up 40 steps. A trolley also ran underneath the elevated train. If one listened good on the porch one could hear the train running. The train had a rumble coming down the street, but one got used to it.

It seemed that the milk and bread man came every day or two. In the winter the milk was left on our porch at approximately 5 or 6 in the morning. It was never homogenized, with the cream showing on the top part of the bottle. Cold weather caused the cream to expand and rise out of the top.

Horse and wagons were used, and there was always some horse poop in the street. Supplee Milk Company delivered the milk, and the Freihofer Bread man came to the house with bread and cakes of all kind. The ice man came down the alley, shouting out "Ice Man. the Ice Man!" We would open the back gate and ask for a ten-cent or twenty-cent piece. We had an old ice box in the kitchen. The ice man would bring ice to the icebox and then chip it so that it fit into the space. All hell would break loose if we forgot to empty the water pan underneath, because water would flow all over the floor.

For heat we had a hot air furnace for the winter. Coal was delivered through the window on the front cellar. Either a half ton or one ton was put on a slide until the coal bin was filled. Paper and wood with some coal would start the coal burning, and then we'd shovel more coal in order to get the oven hot. We would stoke it until it got to burning good. We put a damper on the chimney pipe; we'd close it halfway to slow the burning down. Each night we had to shake the ashes to the bottom to cool off the oven, and then put the ashes in a bucket until trash day.

The cellar had a big oval wood washing machine that rocked back and forth to clean and wash the clothes. There was a hand-wringer on one side to feed clothes through and to wring the water out after rinsing. On cold days we would hang clothes on ropes in the cellar near the furnace, or perhaps we'd string out ropes in the yard.

We had a large porch with a big swing to hold three or four people. It help up for nearly fifteen years. We also got a metal glider to sit on and a swing with one chair.

Winter snows were deep (2-3 feet). There were seven steps from the porch to the sidewalk. Most all houses had one large tree at the curbside, and a small front yard.

I never had a car until I was 17.

There was no TV. We had an old-fashioned radio to pick up good programs like Jack Benny, Amos and Andy, Joe Louis fights, and country music.

We had one grandmother, Hattie Weintraut. She had two daughters and four sons.

Aunt Hazel had one son and three girls. Her husband, Emil, lost his grocery store in the Depression. He earned money by traveling around town in his car, selling fresh eggs from his home.

We had a piano in our house. No one played except Aunt Hazel. She could not read music, but she was a superb player. Her sister Pauline was very flamboyant and married a police captain from Chicago. Later she was married to a big blow, a nice man who sold freight cars. Her brother Walter moved to Lehigh and was a brick layer. He had a son. Her brother Albert was a painter and had one daughter. Her brother Harry drove the largest oil truck ever. He would visit us during the day and park his truck outside the house.

Hattie was Dad's mother. She had infantile paralysis and wound up with one short leg and had to wear special boots, one of which was three inches short. She had a noticeable limp. In her old age she lived alone in an apartment. She loved listening to church services on the radio and spent most of her time in solitude. In later years she spent six months with each child. We would get her for six months. She was really never a bother, but I think she disturbed my Mom at times.



She gave me my first Bible, one with a leather cover and a zipper. I still have it now after 70 years!

The entire family was Catholic, but few of us went to church. When I was about 14 I went with my boy friends to the most beautiful Presbyterian church at 63rd and Vine, a

mere block from our Catholic church. We used to usher at services, collect money in trays, pass out little glasses of grape juice on big trays.

We had the Red Eagle Baseball team and I tried it for a while.

I had to be in the choir and at Christmas time the chorus which would walk through the neighborhoods singing carols and getting cookies and hot chocolate. My time in the choir ended when I was given the final solo during a special song during a church service. The choral director pointed at me to sing "And come let us adore him" and I froze with fright. I never uttered a single word, but no one knew any different because the song was over. Embarrassed, I quit the choir.

Due to the lack of a connection to the Catholic church, my sister got married in the Presbyterian church. Her husband was Lutheran; he never went to church either. They brought six children into the world. They were always late with the rent. At least four times they asked me to move their furniture and large appliances late at night so that they could escape and break their lease. But since they were family, I helped them out. I remember my son-in-law signed a real promissory note for \$250, and that was all I had in the bank. My sister always promised to pay me back at the start of every month. I never saw a penny. They wrote too many checks without having any money in their account. Numerous people, including officers of the law, were constantly looking for them. They moved to Ocean City, NJ, and lived in a large house. They thought they could always cash a check. Soon they were in court, but they always talked their way out of trouble by promising to repay the people whom they swindled. They simply gave them worthless checks dated for a future date. Finally, they were caught and locked up. Their children were handed over to the local authorities and stayed in foster homes. One more mistake: when they were released, they traveled to Florida with the children and paid their entire way with worthless checks. All you had to do was sign your name and show your driver's license. It was mainly Leona who signed the bad checks. They tracked her down and put her in a woman's prison in Florida. They always wrote to Mom for money. Mom showed me all the money order receipts she had sent during these bad years. I was surprised, as I was married at this time and Mom was totally on her own (the house was already paid off). She worked at various jobs. I would visit her and leave her extra money, never realizing that she was sending it all to Leona. After all of this, I was not close to my sister for many years. I had my own family to take care of.

Their oldest boy lost a leg in an auto accident. The oldest girl married a Hawaiian fellow and moved to Las Vegas—far away from the family. Leona moved to Philadelphia in a home on Main Broad Street and operated a nursing home for old people. She would get the social security checks and gave them room and board. She probably made enough to survive. Her husband finally did get a job in a factory, and that kept them out of trouble over the next years.

Mom died while Leona was interned, also her husband serve time. She had a Florida lawyer sue me, claiming that Mom was well-to-do and had expensive furnishings in her home, and Leona wanted her share. After Dad died, Mom had a roomer still living at

home, a terrific man in his 40s. He worked on the tug boats in the Delaware River. He came home around 10 or 12 midnight and left the house around 6-7 in the morning. He never made any noise and he minded his own business. His monthly rent helped Mom. I think he lived at our house since I was 12 or so, about three years after Dad died.

Leona growing up was small and beautiful and dressed like a movie star. At 16 she was a whiz and always went out to meet boy friends. She was told to be home no later than 9:30 or 10, but she never made the curfew. Since she was Daddy's girl she never had to face punishment. But Mom and Dad had several bad fights over her failure to pay attention to the house rules. Frequently, the bad language and screaming would disturb me. I was really sorry for Mom, since she was so good and faithful. At some point Dad, who was always out on Saturdays, started coming home later on Saturday night. Mom would pounce on him and fight for an hour. "Where were you? What were you doing?"

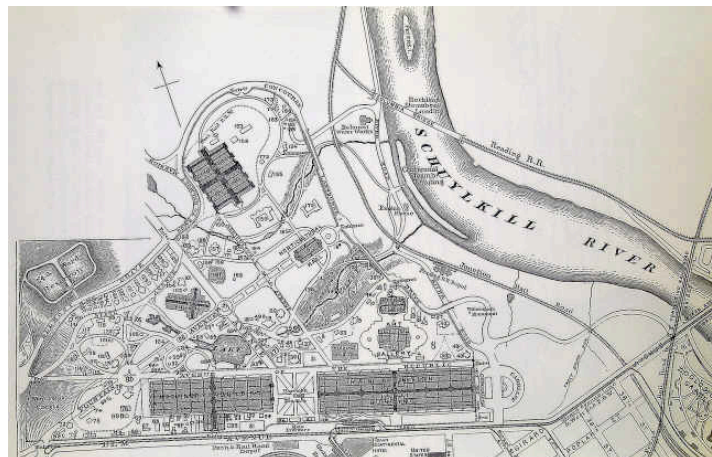
We never had a car or a TV, but he got a phone hung in the dining room, so Dad could call his girl friend from South Philly. He must have told Mom about some of the goings-on. He had the nerve to receive phone calls from his girlfriend at home, and he also called her with whispered conversations. He was always home on Sundays. Mom would be all upset and cried bitterly. Finally she had a phone put in our roomer's closet upstairs, so that if anyone called Dad, she could listen in as a spy. I'm sure he would have cursed and punched her out if he had ever known about it. She had the bell in the phone disconnected and told the roomer never to say a word about it. The roomer was greatly disturbed himself about the problem. During the week after 7 pm, every time the phone rang in the dining room, she would hurry upstairs to sit in the closet and listen to the conversation. She was not able to confront Dad with her secret, fearing that her life was in danger.

Our family never went anywhere together, except once when I was 10. Mom and Dad took us to Woodside Park (an amusement park in Fairmount Park in Center City). We would ride the trolley to 52nd and Parkside and get on open-sided wooden trolley cars and ride through the park for 25 minutes until we got to Woodside Park. What a thrill I had! It was like leaving the country! Dozens of thrilling rides and popcorn and a wonderful vacation where we could stay until dark and see the fireworks and then take the old trolley cars back to civilization.





My Dad never took a vacation or went to the movies or went shopping. I guess I was about 12 when I first went to the movies at 60th Street, two blocks away. It was on a Saturday. The old woman two houses down invited Mom, Leona and me to her vacation home in Pine Beach, NJ, near the banks of the river near the ocean. We did have a lot of fun. Dad never went. I guess he had his own fun whenever we went away, since we stayed for about a week. A year or two later Mom would rent a bungalow at Pine Beach for a week in the summertime and persuaded her girl friend Anna to bring her own children along to split the cost. Here I almost lost my life. I got up early one morning by myself and I wandered down to the river's edge where people tied their boats to the wharfs. I saw a nice kayak at the wharf and just wanted to sit in it to see what it was like. I got in, loosened the rope from the pier and moved several yards out. For some reason I tried to stand up. The entire bottom of the kayak gave way and I plunged into the water. Before I knew what was happening the water was over my head. Panic set in and I feared I was going to drown. This was one time I was really scared! I pulled myself up through the bottom and wiggled my way back to the pier and thanked God for saving my life, as I had no idea how to swim. I was extremely sorry for running away. I tied the kayak up and ran back to the bungalow to get my nerves back to normal. I never told anyone about this because I never should have tried to use someone else's boat. After junior high my Dad discussed school and he decided I should not go to high school. He knew I had learned a lot about clocks; my hobby was wrist watches. He wanted me to go to BOK Vocational School instead. I was collecting grown-up wages as a fifteen-year-old in a grocery store because they used another guy's social security number so that I could get hourly wages. I was very much liked by the supervisors who used the back room of our store for their monthly meetings. They got to know me as a superior and honest worker. They promised me that when I turned 16 they would give me the American Store at 61st and Pine, six blocks away. I would be a manager and earn a much better pay. But Dad gave me one of his rare talkings-to, impressing upon me that I would never get anywhere in life by being a grocery-store clerk or manager. He wanted me to learn a solid trade, in case the depression should ever come back. I always marveled at the jewelry store on Market Street and secretly desired to have my own store and deal in watches and jewelry. They used to sell jewelry on time for 50 cents or \$1.00 per week to people who were mostly honest and who made the payments. Their family (Italians) ran the shoe store six days a week. Their red-headed daughter caught my eye and aroused my desire, but it was not meant to be. She ended up marrying an Italian man who opened up his own jewelry store, right next to the shoe store. I told my boss and supervisor that I was going to vocational school (at 15!) and desired to learn watchmaking (a course offered at BOK). BOK offered any kind of trade education. It was equal to high school. There was regular class learning in the morning and trade shop of one's



choice after noon. The school was modern, beautiful, six stories high and always crowded. It offered vocational education to boys and girls alike.

I was thrilled to go and as a 15-year-old I was a year or two ahead of the other students. The regular high school was closer to home. I took the el six miles to 8th and Market, then took the streamline trolley to 8th and Mifflyn. That was two-and-a-half miles on one fare.

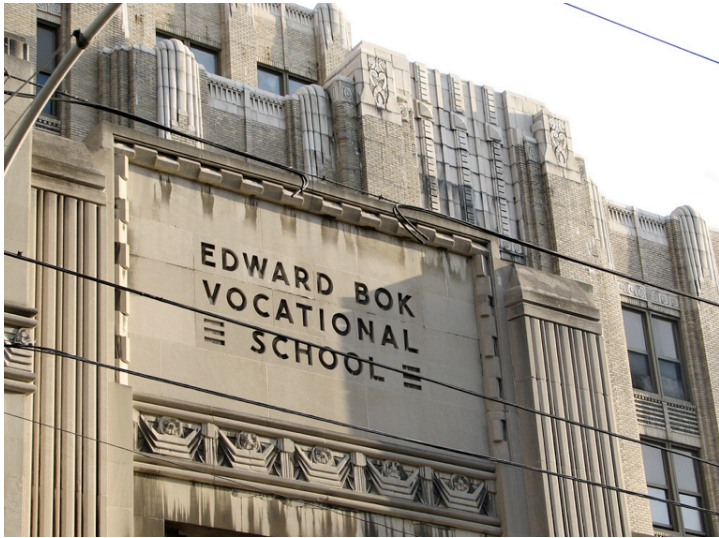
As a 14 -year-old I had practiced watch repair at home in my bedroom. I carried most of the tools I needed for schooling in a metal toolbox. Sometimes I put my lunch in the toolbox. Initially, after school I put in some hours at the grocery store to earn some extra money. There were approximately ten students in our class. Five of them were already in families that had businesses in Jeweler's Row at 8th and Sansom. Their fathers talked them into learning the trade.

Our teacher reminded me of Santa Claus. He had to be about 65 or older. His face had white hair. He must have known something about watch repair to get this job. A regular person could never teach such a trade, and he really did a great job. He was very friendly with most of the class and kibitzed around most of the time. We spent months learning how to sharpen tools—a skill that was essential. The shop did not have the modern kind of cleaning machine or even offer samples of tools or items to work on. We had to bring our own tools and watches, even if they were broken. I continued to work on my skills in my bedroom, educating myself and perfecting the trade that I was learning at school. I learned more form reading trade manuals than from school.

At age sixteen you could have normal English, Math and Science courses in the morning between 8:30 and 12:30, and then be released to go to work instead of going to trade school, as lone as you had working papers signed by a parent. My greatest desire was to find a job in the watchmaking repair store. Now, where in heaven could I ever find such a store? I had no experience, and other boys had parents already in the trade. Their parents said to them: "Stay the course and learn a trade." My father agreed to sign the working papers, and after a while I found an ad in the newspaper. A business in Germantown (2132 East Chelten Avenue, miles and miles away from home!) needed a watchmaker. The owner, Max Weinberg, was hesitant to even talk to me because of my young age, and I was boyish and very young looking. However, I convinced him that I was worth a trial period. Since this was wartime, there was a shortage of watchmakers. Max advertised throughout the area and had out-of-town jewelers sent him watches to be repaired and he returned them by insured mail . People thought I was in defense because I carried my lunch around in a metal box. I first went to work on a Saturday. It was six miles to 8th and Market, and then I had to take the subway to Ridge Avenue, then transfer to another subway at Broad Street (another six miles), where I took Trolley Car #6 up to Ogontz Avenue, and then finally I took Trolley Car #55 for a mile to get to the store. In those days such commutes meant nothing.

Every week about ten people brought in watches to be repaired, and another 40-50 watches were sent in by mail. At the store Weinberg had one watchmaker as well as an





Army veteran with bad nerves who had half of his pay subsidized by a government program.

I got two watches to clean. Weinberg watched me as I worked. I was very careful not to make any mistakes, and he was pleased with the finished product. Certain tools were hard to get during the war. I went to a large tool company and bought a watchmaker's lathe and chucks needed to do fine work. Weinberg has thrilled when he saw the machine. He originally came

from Russia with his wife and sons; he had very old tools. I guess I earned a dollar an hour, plus expenses for transportation. I told him that I was on the program for sixteen-year-olds at school and thus could never get to work before 1:30, but I could stay until 6:30 and all day on Saturday. No one else applied for the job, so he hired me on probation.

Dad liked this arrangement because times were tough and I was bringing money into the household. I was happy that he allowed to keep some money for spending. I discussed quitting school altogether so that I could start a trade with this job. Dad agreed, and Max was happy that I could work from 9 to 5:30 every day. I was now a full-time worker and every day I learned more and more about my trade, I may have had questions from time to time, but Max would not teach me anything. He was pleased to have someone to do work for him. Even his wife liked me. She was a short woman, about five feet tall. They lived behind the store on the second floor; their two sons were already in college. All day long while I was working I would hear her say in her thick accent: "Heddy, Heddy, come upstairs and help the girl flip the mattress" or "Heddy, Heddy, go across to the delicatessen and get one loaf of college bread and one big pickle." This was all part of my job, but it didn't matter to me at all.

Weinberg had a girl secretary who came after school and wrote out bills and took them to the post office. She was very nice, and after a while I asked her out on a date. She lived about a mile away from the store. I met her halfway after eating dinner at home. We went to the Earle Theater to the movies and walked six block up Broad Street, then took the subway and had milkshakes at Hot Shoppe, walked her home at 11 o'clock and came in her house for a minute. I asked myself where her parents were. Since it was Saturday night they were out at clubs and would not be home until early in the morning. She turned off all the lights except for a small one, put on music, and we danced. I began to sense that this might go too far, so I told her I had to travel for an hour to get back home and had to be going. I left without kissing her.

Janet was Jewish, and her parents would have guessed from my name that I was Jewish too. I never asked her out on a date again since she lived too far away from my home. I was very careful not to get mixed up in a love affair.

One day I told my Dad that, since I was earning good money, I would like to pay board and open up a savings account with the rest to buy a car. He was not pleased, telling me that if I wanted to pay board, I should move somewhere else. After a year working at Weinberg's I landed a new job with higher pay and in Center City. Max cried the blues when I left and offered me more money (\$40 weekly as opposed to \$64 at the new job), but I told him it was simply too far to travel every day. However, I did promise him that I would continue working on Saturdays from 9 to 5:30 to help him out. I knew he was strapped.

MB Jewelry Company repaired watches for jewelers all across the country. I now worked in a regular trade shop with several watchmakers. I was only seventeen, though, and they were all skeptical of my knowledge. So they gave me a desk in a small room next to Liebermann's office. There I worked with Dave and Rube, two handicapped men who could not walk without their crutches. They had lots of experience repairing watches, and they immediately put me to the test, giving me six watches to repair. I did great work until I got to the last watch. This was small, about the size of a fingernail, and I needed a special tool to make an adjustment I was unfamiliar with. Fortunately, they said my work was excellent on the other watches and were surprised that a seventeen-year-old had so much talent.

My weekly pay was \$64 net, with a take-home pay of \$54.10. Watchmakers need their own tools and I had my own good set. I was still quite shy. Liebermann took me out to lunch and told me about his business. He was a great businessman, and he gave me hope that one day I would have my own store. Liebermann liked me a lot, and after a month he sent me upstairs to the big shop on the third floor and introduced me to eight more watchmakers. Here I worked mostly on piecework. I enjoyed everything I did and always did my best. Parts were hard to come by at this time, especially for certain models, but I knew enough to make some of the parts on my own by using my new lathe with thirty different chucks and my new K&D staking tool with forty punches.

Once again I told my father that I wanted to pay board (\$25 weekly) and save the balance (\$29) for a new car. He was so upset that he did not talk to me for three or four weeks. I simply gave the money to Mom, telling her that it was only fair that I paid for staying at home. Naturally, she was on my side. I soon had \$800 saved up, and I started doing some repairs independently to increase the amount. I told Dad that I really wanted a car and could now pay it off in full. The war was still on and new cars were hard to buy; dealers even wanted money "under the counter" so that they could put me on line to get one direct from the factory. One night Dad came home and told me he had found a brand-new coupe style car, grey and chrome with fancy whitewalls and big yellow fog lamps, six cylinder with automatic transmission: a Hudson. I had never heard of this make. I was flabbergasted, but happy that he took me to the showroom at 40th and Chestnut. I had enough cash to pay for 90% of it, and I took out a loan from Dad to

pay the balance. He made the arrangements at the Teachers Credit Union. I was really worried about parking it outside our house, but it was always safe there. I did not drive to work because of the parking costs, but after work I was proud as a peacock to drive my four friends around town.

When I turned 18 I received a letter from the Army. I had to report for duty in December. I tried to appeal the call-up, claiming that I needed to take care of my mother since she did not have a husband and was thus needed at home. All they did was give me a sixth-day extension. I was called up in February. Neither my mother nor Liebermann was happy. I had to report to the army center on Passyunk Avenue for the induction. Many eighteen-year-olds from my neighborhood were also there.

I packed up all of my tools in oil and wrapped them up well to keep them safe in a big trunk in the cellar for two years. I continued working until late January and then I went off to do my service. I had a physical and the doctor asked me if I liked girls (just to be funny). A few boys I knew brought along some chemicals to put in their urine in the hope that they would be dismissed, but their plan didn't work.

After we were issued clothes and shoes and an army instruction manual, we were all informed "No draft for you," because the war was over. Everyone could go home. So I went back to work, but everyone through I was 4-F and simply got out of the draft.

At this time at home Dad showed me twenty \$100 bills. My uncle told me his woman friend, an Italian woman with a 25-year-old son, liked Dad a lot and provided him lots of money to gamble, where he made out OK. This was where he was spending his Saturday nights: seeing his girl friend. After being spied on by Mom for quite a few months, he found the phone and ripped it out of the wall and all hell broke loose. We still had the phone in the dining room. I tried not to answer it when it rang because I still stuttered at home. Outside the house I talked very well. I was paying off my car on time. Dad wanted me to drive him out to a Lincoln car dealership on City Line Avenue in the posh area called Bryn Mawr. Dad had ordered a brand new twelve-cylinder Lincoln coupe. I saw him pay for it in cash. It must have cost over \$3000. It was the most beautiful car I had ever seen and he parked it outside the house while he got his driver's license. How he was set. Every Saturday morning he would drive off in his Lincoln, never taking Mom anywhere. I think maybe once he drove the family (with Mom and Leona) to show off the car to his brother up in Lawndale. He was a real big cheese now, but he still went to work at the public school every day.

He was deeply involved with the woman in South Philly. Mom had me shadow him one Saturday night, but red lights made it hard to keep up the pursuit. One day she paid my boyfriend to follow him in his old jalopy, with her in the passenger seat. I don't know how this turned out. One time, Mom caught the woman on the phone while in the clo set and told her off good, that was when Dad ripped the phone out of the wall. The friction at home was tremendous; I was happy to be away at work or driving around in my car. One time I went on a double-date with my boyfriend Jim, whose car was in the shop. He wanted to show off to his girl and asked me if I would let him drive the Hudson. After a

while I gave in and sat in the back set with my girl friend. It was raining slightly. Woodland Avenue had trolley tracks. I asked him to drive more carefully. At a big intersection he had the right of way. A smoothie Italian had a stop sign, but pulled out right in front of Jim. Jim tried to brake, but slid on the tracks. The Italian smashed into my fender. Oh, my beautiful car! Jim was so sorry about the accident. I took over the driving from that point. I never did get the Italian to pay me a cent for the accident because he had a friend who worked in the judicial system and they combatted my efforts to take him to court. The poor fender stayed smashed in for over a month. I finally was able to get it repaired, but the car was never the same after that. My fog lamps were broken as well.

Did Jim ever offer to help me pay for the repairs? No! He never seemed to be able to find a job. About a month later I took a different girl to Sharon Dance and Skating Hall. We skated most of the time. Jim changed girls after a few rounds and he had taken a liking to this girl. Several weeks earlier when he came over to our house he asked me all kinds of questions about Margaret. I wondered why? Did I really like her? Did you fool around with her? I just told him I didn't discuss girls I went out with. So when we went out skating that evening he asked her if he could take her home. He had a lot of guts. She asked me if I minded. I just said: "Big deal. If that's what you want, then just go ahead." I went home alone and felt that it was odd that she went home with him. She was a nice girl friend and we had lots of good times together, She was skinny and boney and had no breast shape, but was just a good friend. The two of them became chummy. After a while I sold Jim an engagement ring and he got my girl. He wanted me to swear that I had never been in her pants, but just to be mean I never assured him of anything. He really wanted her badly, but after a year or so he called off the engagement and then wanted me to buy the ring back, since he never had a steady job. I told him to save it for the next princess.

Jim had a funny side and a cheap side. He had to wear a false top plate in his mouth due to a sledding accident. When he talked to girls he thought it was funny to slip it out of his mouth on his tongue. He worked at an usher at a movie theater—a job he didn't hold for long. He would tell me, Bill and George to wait by the exit door exactly at 2:30 matinee time and he would sneak us in. Bill and George took him up on the offer, but I knew something was wrong so I just went home alone. Once, when he worked at the corner drug store, I went in to get a milk shake with triple ice cream. While the pharmacist was watching, Jim rang up No SALE and fake putting money in the cash register. I never went back. I guess Jim lasted two or three weeks there. Jim was thin and had a gift of gab when talking to girls, yet he had a hard time keeping them. He had three brothers: George, who was one year older, and two smaller brothers. During the war his father was an officer in the navy and never came home too often. His mom did the best she could raising four boys. We all lived on the same street. George fell for an Irish, Catholic girl, but her parents objected to his being Presbyterian. But love won over. They agreed to have their first child raised a Catholic, the second one a Protestant, and so on. They lasted together a good four or five years and moved into a new home in the suburbs. His mother-in-law did the marriage in, as she was always finding fault with whatever he did. He finally had enough, left his wife and job and

headed down to Florida, where he met another woman. She had money and a big boat and they lived happily ever after.

Jim finally did find a girl and had to marry her. They had a few kids. She was a very nice companion, but he started to drink and became a boozier and died an early death.

Well, I finally paid off my car and started saving up more money. As a young fellow, every Saturday night my friends and I went to Catholic dances up north Broad Street to meet girls. Up to this time we had always gone roller skating at 69th Street. They served beer there and my buddies always said they needed a little encouragement to speak up. I never drank and never smoked, even though my father smoked three packs a day and died an early death due to asbestos poisoning.

## Sex and Love

When I was fourteen I had a sexual experience that bothered me for a long time. We were friendly with the neighbor across the alley. The father was a big, fat beer guzzler who would come over to sip beer with my parents. He would usually bring along his sixteen-year-old daughter for a visit and for parties. During the day our house doors were never locked. The daughter would often come through the back door and chased me around the house, up and down the stairs, grabbing my crotch. This really put me off, but I missed a great opportunity. One day when no one was home she called me upstairs. She was in my mother's room, lying on the bed. She told me to come closer because she had a surprise for me. She pulled back the covers and there she was, completely nude, with her legs spread apart. "This is for you!" she said. I was shocked and embarrassed and scared at what I was exposed to. I was speechless and did not know what to do, so I ran as fast as I could back down the stairs into the kitchen. She cornered me there and asked me why I did not like and why I did not like sex. It was too much too fast for me, and I told her never to come back over again.

It turned out that she had been having dates with sailors downtown. She must have gotten laid and now she had a hot twat. If I had been a couple of years older, things would have been very different. She probably would have become pregnant and I would be fingered as the father. I never had sex with any of my girl friends. No way!

My friend George had the most beautiful blonde girlfriend, but he broke off their relationship after dating her for a while because she too always talked about religion. Her family belonged to some weird church that taught them to always talk about God. I had no girlfriends at the time so I asked George if I could date her, He said "you can have the bitch." So I called her up and thought I would have a nice girl. We went to different places, to the movies and to dances, but after five dates she started asking me about George. Oh, boy, now I have another lulu. I passed word on to George, but he was not interested and told me I would be happier if I never saw her again.

At another dance I met Betty McCoy, a tall, black-haired beauty with beautiful eyes. After a few dates I took her home and we played kissy-wissy in the car outside her house. She lived in the smallest row-house in South Philadelphia that I had ever seen, tucked away on a tiny, narrow lane. I always expected to be asked inside for some coffee and a bun etc. It was strange, but she never invited me in. One of our last dates was a double date with her girl friend and a sailor named Joe. We ate at fancy Kelly's Firehouse in Center City. The meal was good, and we had a good time. When the bill came to the table, I said I would pick up the tab. But I could not find my wallet anywhere. I asked him to go with me to the men's room so that I could tell him privately how embarrassed I was. Joe paid the tab, and I assured him that I would give his girl friend the money later so that we would be even. I told Betty about my embarrassment and later in the week gave her the money to pass on to Joe. Things seemed to go downhill from there. Things cooled off, I stopped calling her and one month later we called everything off.

I was very naive about sexual matter and for this reason had a strange incident. Of course, we were taught in school how easy it was to father a child by fooling around, and we learned about sexual desires. Throughout my teenage years I always told myself to be very careful. When I worked for Max Weinberg I always had long rides home on the train. One night I sat across from a pretty teen-aged girl. I read my newspaper because I didn't want to get caught in a starting context. When I flipped the newspaper over to turn the page, I saw her with her legs spread wide open and her dress pulled up. I blushed and covered my face with the newspaper, but at every station I looked up only to see her in a new open-legged position, smiling at me enticingly. I was glad when my stop finally came! Fortunately she did not follow me.

At one Catholic dance I met Cecilia with her sister. Cecilia came from a poor family on Woodlawn Avenue. I think she was the third of seven children. I drove both of them home from the dance and she said she really liked me (or maybe it was really my car). We started going out together two or three times a week. She was short, slender, and had beautiful red, curly hair. She worked at the Saturday Evening Post Building downtown and probably spent most of her pay on clothes. On each date she would have me park outside the house and a specific time and then run out of the house to meet me. I was never asked into her house until much later. She was always dressed up nicely, and she was so pretty. I had my first real romance, full of hugs and kisses! We went to all kinds of parks and fun places in Philadelphia. I also began working downtown at 733 Sansom Street, right around the corner from the Post Building. I tried to catch her coming out of work on several occasions, but she always managed to escape out of a different door because she did not want me to see her in working clothes and without make-up.

After our next date she allowed me to take her to the door of her house and go into a large foyer. I waited there until she went into the house and took off her coat. She came back and we hugged and kissed for a while. I let my hand slip down her back to below her waist and then immediately back up again because I wanted to get a good feel.

This went on for roughly six months. But one day she let me into the house and sat me on the couch so that I could meet her parents and siblings. Her older sister was always there with her six-foot-tall boyfriend who got married in four months and for whom I served as usher at the wedding.

The parents wanted to know if I was Catholic and which church I attended. Actually, I never went to any church. But one night I brought along my birth certificate to prove that I was really a Catholic. If there was going to be any future for us I was going to have to be a good Catholic and attend mass weekly. I broke down and went to a Catholic priest and began taking "lessons."

I could see that they were already planning our future together. She was a great girl, pretty and a joy to be with, but she was too adamant about her Catholic faith. I felt myself being sucked in to something I was uncomfortable with and wondered whether I could really be happy with a girl who was so religious, and with a family who was rather

poor and not particularly social. I gave her a good, gold birthstone ring as a gesture of friendship. In the summer time I really wanted to go to the pool and the ocean. First of all, because I like to swim, but also because I wanted to see her body in a bathing suit—especially since it seemed that we were drifting to spend our lives together. I guess I really wanted to see what I would be getting in life. Yet she declined over and over again.

She always was bringing up religion. I'm pretty sure that she did not really care much that I was normal and not a die-hard Catholic. I was very open around religious questions and told her I would be returning to the church and the sacraments. We enjoyed every moment of our togetherness for a year and a half, and I can assure you that there was no hanky panky. Finally, we went out for an overnight stay at her sister's house in Boulder State forest above Leighton. The weather was really cold and we stayed in the park. Each of us wore long johns and brought food and blankets. While walking around the park (there were over 100 round boulders like bowling balls, 30 to 40 inches around), we were talking about this and that, and out of nowhere I asked: "I don't think we will ever get married, do you?" "I almost asked her to marry me, but I wanted to hear from her whether she really and truly loved me and would fight for me. I never heard one word from her about this question. This was our second day and we had trouble starting my car (moisture had gotten into the spark plugs). Her sister knew about the situation and saw that I was disturbed since I now had no way I could talk to Cecelia. Her husband insisted on driving back home sixty miles; Cecelia and I sat in the back seat. I tried talking to her, but she would not say a thing. I could tell, though, that she was crying.

I just could not bring myself to say "Would you marry me?" What a long trip that was! When we got back home I tried to call her up and write her letters, but nothing worked. Yet my heart was not broken. I remembered my father telling me years earlier never to get married unless the girl tells you that she loves you. So there I was: one-and-a-half years of my life wasted and she was mad and refused to talk to me ever again. Her sister suggested that I just go out on a date with her other sister, but she was hardly beautiful and the suggestion was just stupid. So I spent several lonely weekends before I went back to dances again.

After dating a few other girls, I met a special girl named Dorothy at a Catholic dance. We danced very close together and bells started ringing. Before I approached her, she was dancing with a short guy with curly hair. I asked her if I could drive her home. She flatly refused, saying that her brother drove her here and her brother would drive her back. He reminded me of a pimp hanging around and I had second thoughts about having anything to do with her. Anyway, I got her phone number and promised to call her. I asked whether she might want to go out to a movie next Saturday night. She agreed and gave me her address. She told me that she worked in a dress store on Germantown Avenue and that I could pick her up after work at 8 pm. So I showed up shortly before 8, parked the car, and walked her around the corner to the movies. Once we got seated I quickly put my arm around her. She did not mind at all. After the movie I drove her home and arranged for another movie next week. But then I asked her if she



would like to go to an amusement park tomorrow, on Sunday. Once again she agreed, so at noon the very next day I picked her up and walked throughout the park holding hands and being close and extremely friendly. After many dates I discovered that she wore glasses. She apologized for hiding this from me, because she feared I would lose interest if I saw her with them on. I asked her to wear glasses ever since. I finally found the girl I had been looking for. She liked to dance and to swim and to go to the shore and to parks. Moreover, she was beautiful and not concerned about religion and was generally always happy.

When I first met Dorothy I told her my name was “Ed Trout,” because I didn’t think that we would last long together. After the sixth date we were fooling around in the backyard with her younger sister Helene, who was ten years old. I was just wearing an undershirt because it was so hot that afternoon. Helene saw inside the top of my shirt where my name was written, and she rushed into the house to tell her mother that her sister was dating a Jew. You can imagine that I had a lot of explaining to do to both her mother and father. I tried to convince them that telling one’s real name was not that important if you were only expecting to go out on a few dates. Fortunately, they were very happy to hear I was of German descent and from a Catholic household, and they approved Dorothy’s wish to continue going out with me.

Dorothy and I dated for four years before we got married. I drove each night from my house to hers in Germantown—about twelve miles—to pick her up for dates. I would take her to all my favorite places. We were seeing each other about four times every week until her mother cut them down to three. We chose Wednesdays, Saturdays, and all day Sunday. We were two happy and contented lovers, kissing on dark streets before heading home at night.

## **You're in the Army Now**

When I turned 22 I received another letter from Uncle Sam. The Korean War had just erupted, and I was going to be drafted. I had a good job at 733 Sansom, I had a girl, and now I had to risk losing everything. I was sent with many other eighteen-year-olds to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. 450 miles away! I knew that most draftees were getting six to eight weeks of training before they were shipped off to Korea. To be better prepared for war, someone decided to give 500 of us twelve weeks of training so that we would be better educated about weapons and about the problems of fighting in Korea.

Those were twelve long weeks of grueling training! I sure had trouble keeping up with all the muscle-bound young men! My muscles were sore every single day. Every day I would write a letter to Dorothy, and I looked forward to mail or phone calls or applesauce cake and goodies from her. We lived in two-story barracks without heat; 24 men lived on each floor. There was one large bathroom with 8 toilets and 12 sinks and 12 shower stalls. Everybody walked around naked in the bathroom, something which timid guys took a while to get used to. The barracks were cold at night and oppressively hot in the day. At least the food they served was decent.

We couldn't play around at all. Everything had to be "Yes, sir!" and "No, sir!" We learned how to fire a rifle, machine gun, bazooka, pistol, tank weapons, and mortars. Everyone was assigned kitchen duty and guard duty in alphabetical order. We had to take a number of tests, and I always scored the highest marks. I have to admit that they made good soldiers out of us, but I've always felt sorry for those that were sent to Korea after a mere six weeks.

After the twelve weeks I asked my sergeant where I was going to be sent. "Son, you're going to Korea and you'll be assigned to the Tank Corps." My heart sank. This was the last place I wanted to be, and the last duty I ever would have wished for. I was stunned and depressed.

The next day 200 of us were summoned to report. The names of 170 men were called out and they were sent immediately to catch the train for the coast. I was among those who were left behind. Did we ever get a surprise! "Men, you are being transferred to the 82nd Airborne Station here in Fort Bragg due to your fine test results." I couldn't wait to tell Dorothy the good news. Fortunately, I was given a five-day pass to go home before I reported for duty in my new assignment. I took the train back home and saw Dorothy as soon as I could.

Back at Fort Bragg, we were assigned to units that corresponded to our trades or background. I was assigned to Instrument Company, consisting of 20 men working in a specific building. There was even another watchmaker in the unit! He had already served in the army for four years and was waiting for his discharge. I guess I had been identified as his replacement. I still cannot understand why they needed a watchmaker,

but it all turned out for my benefit. This guy was a slow worker. He cleaned one watch every day, whereas I could easily have cleaned eight.

Since I was still in the army, there were drills every day from dawn until noon. We simulated warfare and had to run for miles up and down North Carolina hills with guns and equipment on our backs. We were also trained how to repair gun sights and binoculars, and we were told that if we ever were sent to the battlefield, we would be stationed behind the lines; the “grunts” would be at the front.

One lucky soldier from Philadelphia was assigned to my unit. He was Charlie Brusstar.

They also wanted to send us for six-weeks of parachuting training at Fort Benning, Georgia. I really did not want to have anything to do with this, but since I was a draftee they expected me to volunteer to go to the school. Out of 300 men there were probably 20 of us who got out of the assignment. People started calling me “Leg.” I felt bad that I would never be able to wear the Jump Wings pin, but I really did not want to jump out of a plane.

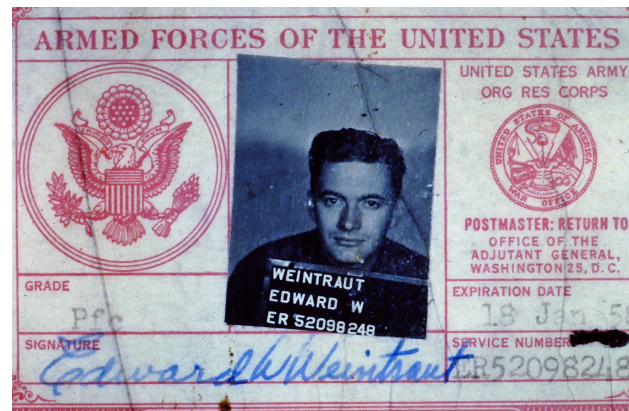
I was then sent to Aberdeen, Maryland, for eight weeks of training on gun sights and binoculars. I was grateful and elated! I was only about 80 miles away from Dorothy! We were in class for eight hours every day and I studied so hard that I graduated first in my class and was commended for my excellent work. When I got back to base, the sergeant publicly called me a credit to the outfit.

Parachuting school continued to haunt me, though. When we were in formation they would call out my name and bark: “Weintraut, when are you going to jump school?” I told them I would go pretty soon. The company commander

summoned me to his office and grilled me about my reasons for avoiding the training. I told him I really did not want to be a parachuter, but that I would give it some more thought.

Later on, because of my high marks and good background, I was asked to go to officer school to start as a petty officer and then pursue a career in the army. It turned out that they wanted me to sign up for another three years after officer training. I wouldn’t have any of that! I think I had too much brains to be a soldier, and, besides, I really wanted to get back home to my job and my girl.

After a year the watchmaker was finally discharged, and I now had my own shop on the base. I repaired watches for soldiers and officers alike, and made a little money on the side. Since the Army could not supply any watch bands, the Commander issued a



special three-day pass for me so that I could drive home with my car (which I now had on base!) and purchase the materials I needed to repair watches for the soldiers and officers.

One day the chief officer at headquarters called me in to see if I could repair his complicated chronograph. I told him it was normally an \$80 repair, but I told him I would only charge him \$30 for parts, and before I knew it I had another three-day pass to drive

home and get the necessary parts. It took eleven hours straight to get back home and another eleven hours to return to base, but I got what I needed: watch repair equipment and a few hours with my girl.

In the meantime I had business cards printed up:

Ed Weintraut, Watchmaker  
782 Ordence  
82nd Airborne



It's a wonder I did not get into trouble. But I can say with a clear conscience: whenever work came to the shop, it was done promptly and properly.

After being in the army for eighteen months I requested a week-long leave to get married on 28 June and then go on my honeymoon in Atlantic City (big deal!). But Dorothy and I were happy. Two months later I arranged for her to come live with me for your months in Fayetteville, North Carolina in a ramshackle ranch house off base.

I had my own truck XXX. We had to go on maneuvers to Texas, of all places. Over 300 men jumped out over Dallas. I drove in a very large caravan of reckless drivers from North Carolina to Texas to meet the troops. We were there for three or four weeks and then drove all the way back XXX. For two years I had a little excitement, but fortunately I had no overseas duty.

The 82nd division was held in reserve in the country. During WWII it was the main division and had been involved in the Normandy Invasion and the theater in Germany.

I brought an assortment of cheap jewelry and watch bands from my shop in Philadelphia to the base and sold many dozen rhinestone necklaces at the end of each month, when the soldiers line up for their pay. Command Inspections took place several times a year. It was a good thing that they never opened the two footlockers in my workshop and saw my inventory.

I was the best soldier they could have expected, but I never signed up for jump school. My buddy from Philadelphia in my Instrument Section could not handle the pressure of being persistently harassed about jumping and finally gave in and signed up for a tour of duty at Fort Benning, Georgia.



Thereafter they sent him to school in Aberdeen, and he began to look down on me. He married XXX and lived Philadelphia, but never bought anything from my store and only visited me once after being released from the service. I think he was jealous of my business venture. He ended up becoming the union head working for the subway system in Philadelphia.

I kept my car while I was in the service. Whenever I left base around noon on Saturday to drive to Philadelphia (returning by 6 am on Monday), he was my “best pal” and drove with me. At times we would take another passenger in the back seat, with the understanding that he would help pay for gas and

mileage. After one year I had a small accident in Raleigh, North Carolina. My motor was already on the way out, so I bought a new black Chevrolet to make sure I would get home on time.

After a month or two one gets acclimated to army life. It’s passable. With luck our mess hall was voted tops in the Division. The sergeant in charge was the greatest cook and controlled the mess hall with great care. If one had kitchen patrol, one had to rise at 5 am and make sure that everything was spic and span, clean as a whistle. The patrol lasted until 9 or 10 at night, and one had to scrub all the pots and pans, floor and tables. Guard duty was a full day long: alternatively four hours alert in the guardhouse, four hours at rest in the guardhouse, until the twenty-four hour period had elapsed. The guard was responsible for checking a huge lot with trucks and tanks. It was always very spooky in the wee hours of the morning. If you were caught napping or sitting down you could serve time in the brig. Officers walked around the premises at night, randomly checking up on the guards. Anytime we saw someone approaching we had to yell out “Halt! Who goes there? Identify yourself!” It was scary when we had to walk between the tanks and trucks, not knowing if anyone up to no good was lurking in the darkness. If there every was any trouble, we had to shoot one bullet in the air. Then a sergeant with a group of soldiers would come running to the area.

One of our troops was court-marshaled for being AWOL. I was ordered to hand-cuff him and take him by jeep to Court Headquarters for the trial. Before driving off they gave me a Colt .45 and ammunition, with the warning: “If he escapes, you’ll be serving his time

for him.” I told the prisoner that if he tried anything funny I would shoot his ass, even though I was sure that he would ever do such a thing. He ended up getting sixty days in the brig and a blemish on his record.

“Weintraut, when are you going to jump school?” I was asked this question publicly at least once a month, in front of the 260 men in our platoon. I would simply answer: “Very soon.” Somehow I got through my two years as a first-class soldier. The food was the greatest because of our chef; seconds were available while we were in camp, when training out in the woods and sleeping in a bag. We had to eat our canned food and fire up wood to heat in with our coffee cup. The only water we had was in our canteen and we traveled everywhere with our rifle.

There are two numbers you never forget for the rest of your life: your gun number and your serial number. Each Saturday morning we had parade call. There were possibly 2000 guys in dress uniform with guns. We marched in front of our general, in perfect step and position in the line up. After all the pomp and circumstance we would march back to the barracks and have lunch. There was only one catch: you got no food unless you did pull-ups at the front door of the mess hall. Sergeant Solo was in charge of the mess hall and he had great connections in getting us the best foods available. One day he chose me to make a run to pick up the food supplies. For some reason he liked me and asked me to be his personal driver. This ended up being a great job with lots of down time. When I came back to the barracks around 10 in the morning with a full truck and then emptied everything into the kitchen, I would ask him what else I could do help. We would almost always say: “Disappear. Go for a drive. Just stay out of my hair!” I did this for several days, but then realized that I could lose my position in the Instrument Shop if I were found out. So I asked the sergeant to give the job to someone else, and I went back to working full-time at the Instrument Shop.

The best training happened when they took three troops to the North Carolina woods around 8 at night and order them to find their way back to a particular location, using a compass and one flashlight. A truck would wait for us on the highway and take us back to camp. All we knew was that we had to head directly northeast and look for the truck lights; it would take at least three hours. Every so often some troops would get lost and take up to five hours before they found the truck.

I used to get a cake in the mail from Dot and I always kept it hidden, fearing that it would be devoured within five minutes if any soldiers knew about it. She also sent me one of the very first RCA battery radios. Late one night I let all the troops listen to a Joe Louis fight. In the fourth round, though, the batteries went dead, and i feared for my life. I was sure one of the soldiers was going to kill me on the spot. After this bad experience I never shared the radio with anyone.

Army Day arrived. Hundreds of draftees were discharged within three or four days. I had the first severe headache of my life and was put on sick call. I had to sit in a waiting room until a “doc” came available to check me out. He told me I had an alarmingly high temperature and arranged for a jeep to rush me to the camp hospital. They all feared I had spinal meningitis. I was put in an isolation ward and treated with many antibiotics. I

told the nurse that I was going to be discharged in two days and promised my wife I would be with her soon, and for that reason had to be released from the hospital. She was firm with me: I had a dangerous illness and could not be removed from isolation. After five long days I persuaded the Hospital Chaplain to call up Dot and let her know that I was confined to a hospital bed. She was confused and disappointed, but after five days the fever subsided and I was prepared for release.

I had my car on base and was ready to drive back to Philadelphia, even in my weakened state. Several soldiers wanted to drive along with me, but changed their minds when I told them about my situation. I was supposed to have turned in my helmet and clothes before leaving base, but they were locked in my trunk, so I got to bring them home as souvenirs. But not my gun! I drove the 450 miles back to Philadelphia, singing to myself to keep myself awake.

## Life as a Married Civilian

Dot had already picked out a small two-room apartment with a shared bathroom with an elderly man. It was a block away from her parents' house. By the time I saw her again she was pregnant and dizzy. I had already saved up some money, which we needed for the living quarters. We found a nice house with an enclosed porch, located one block from our church and four blocks from her parents' house. Her father insisted that we could not afford to buy a house (in those days, he was right!), but I had saved up enough money and Dot worked as well. The owner did not want to sell us a house in this Catholic community because she thought I was Jewish—based on my last name. So we went to a different realtor and told him that we really wanted to buy that house. I also confronted the owner and told her I was of German descent and was married by Father Bogart up the street. She finally gave in. We probably could not have afforded the house without help from the GI Loan: for \$10,000 and a 20% deposit I got a house with a \$8000 mortgage. Within a month we moved in and have a six-room house with one bath, a garage, and a beautiful front yard. However, we had no furniture, so a bed was going to be our first purchase.

Back home, I got my old job back in the trade shop. There was no air conditioning; in the summer we worked in our shorts with the fan blowing. After approximately one year, a jeweler was opening up a store a half a block away at 135 South 8th Street. He made an offer to me to fix watches and supervise the store when he was absent. He already had had a store at 2000 South 8th Street and left his wife XXX as they lived upstairs above the store. Nate Postiloff. I was earning more pay and was advancing into retail! My good luck continued!

The store was small (roughly 8 x 12), but it was in Jeweler's Row and I was the manager! I was learning a lot from a great boss, and Nate was a born businessman. This education in retail was exactly what I needed at this time, and it formed the foundation for the future. Every so often he would ask my opinion about certain merchandise; we were a great team. He would occasionally check me for honesty: he would drop a \$5 bill on the floor, have jeweler from a different store come in, pick it up and give it to me, asking if I had lost something. I would always give the bill back to Nate, and he began to trust me more. It's amazing, but in such a small store we sold many things other than jewelry. Between him and me we would pick out other items "on approval" and sell them almost immediately. For example, I convinced him once to buy a few dozen umbrellas; within a few weeks we had sold over a hundred. One time he brought back from New York a beautiful stuffed monkey that was about 16 inches tall. I told him I thought it was a winner, so he ordered two dozen. This shipment filled the store. Nate wandered up and down Jeweler's Row, selling them to other store keepers, and before we knew it, we had sold eight dozen monkeys!

In the summertime we would line up fans on the sidewalk outside the store. These retailed for \$39; we sold them for \$28. From this I realized that selling for low profit made good sense, and we earned quite a bit of money from the volume of business we did. In the winter we even hawked cans of antifreeze and sold over four dozen in a



matter of no time. Nate had excellent credit and always paid his bills on time. Through his downtown store he could order Bulova or Benrus watches in May or June, and not be required to pay until 10 January! He would order 50 of each model and then sell them to the jewelers on the street for \$5 over cost. The big companies did not sell to each of these small businessmen, so they were eager to buy their merchandise from Nate, especially at such low prices. Nate sold his entire stock of watches before the summer ended and thus had money to burn for the Christmas season.

Nate frequently made trips to New York to buy rhinestone jewelry by the gross. We had no trouble selling this to our customers, both in the trade and off the street.

Within a few years Nate purchased a three-story building across the street at 134 South 8th Street, along with four large safes from a company going out of business on Chestnut Street. Luck continued to bless this go-getter. Now he needed more help. He hired and trained young fellows with families. Each morning I had to open all safes and put out the merchandise on display XXXXXXX



GE, Sunbeam, and other appliances were soon in stock. 50 Hoover vacuum cleaners, 50 pieces of American Tourister luggage, toasters, mixers, typewriters, adding machines, in short, every sellable item was in our storeroom and we were expected to sell all of them. Fellow jewelers liked our policy of selling to them slightly above cost, and regular customers off the street spread the word that we offered goods at wholesale prices. Our store was busy year round.

Nate promised that he would teach me about diamonds, but he never did. Very few ever got a proper education in the diamond trade. I decided to try my luck with a correspondence course offered by the Gemological Institute, paid for by the government as a veterans' benefit. This course took about three months of study. Individual chapters would be sent to my home, followed by tests that were anything but easy. I had to send each test to LaSalle College on Olney Avenue. For the final exam I had to sit alone in a room, missing one day of work, unpaid. I earned the top grade on the test and was awarded the grade of Graduate Gemologist. Several years later I finally had the opportunity to go to diamond grading school for one week at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Center City, sponsored by the Gemological Institute, and received top honors there.

I took a week off from work to attend this seminar. There were ten others who participated. I don't think Nate liked it when he found out what I did with my time off. He probably did not like me knowing as much as he did. But how much did he really know? When a customer bought any jewelry item, particularly diamonds, he would often tell

them that it was “saffinated.” When they asked what that meant, he would reply: “it has effiseefiss around the fididdies and was picoopilated on the side.”

In the meantime I was saving enough money to make double and triple payments on the mortgage of our house so that we could own it clear. I built a workbench at home so that I could do repairs there, and I also advertised for watch repairs in the monthly Church bulletin. As time went by Nate’s son-in-law came back from Army duty and was given my job as manager of the store. I could tell from the start that he did not like me, but I tried to be pleasant and accept him as my boss. Marty would have been happy if I stayed in the back room, unseen, repairing watches. One day, after I was done with all my repairs, I asked him what he would like me to do. He thought for a moment, then said that I should repair them all over again. Marty was snappy and stupid, but I lingered on until I found out that I had a hernia. This turned out to be a blessing.

## The Store

While I was recuperating in the hospital, I was approached by an old timer in the trade who dealt in antiques. He told me there was a store empty on Walnut Street and encouraged me to make the move and open my own business. He offered to join me to cover expenses: all he needed was two showcases to display his antique jewelry; I could have the rest of the store. I pondered the offer for a week. This was a big move, and a big gamble. I had a family to support. I could not afford to modernize the store. But I got a good deal on six showcases and five wallcases from a store that was going out of business. A family member hauled them downtown in a rental truck, but he did not tie them down good and one wallcase fell off the truck in center city. It was so smashed up that my friend Barney pulled it out of the street onto the sidewalk and left it there. I was still so sore from the operation that I could not lift anything for several months.

My old boss Nate was very nice and promised to give me all of his watch repair work. His son-in-law was probably happy that I was finally gone.

Our store opening was fancy, with all kinds of food and drink. All of my relatives came for the free-bee. My partner in the store, Sam Munzer, paid 25% of the rent since he only had a small area with one counter for his business. Munzer would come in around 10 or 10:30 and leave around 4:30. He spent much of his time outside the store, making frequent business trips to New York. We got along fine. After three years he and his wife flew to England for vacation. On the return flight the plane was struck by lightning over Wilmington, Delaware and all passengers were killed. I turned his merchandise over to his family. Now I was completely on my own and thus needed help. I hired a young boy out of high school, Richard, and later an older woman who worked for me for a good ten years.

I also hired an Italian boy from South Philadelphia who was recommended to me from someone in Jeweler's Row. He was a flashy dresser, wearing black-and-white shoes and pressed pants. Within two days I realized that cash from sales was not landing in the cash register. He was tucking it in his shoe or under his belt. I called for a local detective, who found extra cash on the boy when frisking him in the hallway. The boy denied stealing anything, but the detective gave him a warning and told him to get lost. Two night later I started receiving dirty phone calls at 2 am; I could tell it was the boy. I told the detective about it, and he went to the boy's home and threatened to lock him up if there were any future incidents. Finally, I was rid of this worker.

There were three other jewelers on the street who had begun selling appliances through a catalog. Without any knowledge of his end of the business I started peddling appliances as well, learning the hard way. Over time we became a small department store, selling the same kinds of merchandise my competitors were selling. Each company I ordered from supplied catalog sheets. I designed a cover for these sheets myself and worked many nights at home in the basement preparing the catalog for printing. I had saved my customers' personal information over the years and printed out labels for distribution and delivery. I sent the assembled catalog sheets to a binder, who

delivered 1000 copies to our home. We set up our office in the dining room and invited friends and family to help us put each catalog in an envelope with a label affixed. Then I applied for a bulk mailing permit so that we could mail the catalogs from the post office at 9th and Market. I could handle only 400 copies at a time because my Chevy could not carry any more weight. We ended up sending 600 through the mail in September and October, just in time for the Christmas rush. We gave the remaining 400 out to new customers who came into the store. As you can imagine, this was quite a learning experience!

We did a lot of business in that fall season, but bills for new expenses kept coming in. I remember feeling my guts burn as I fretted over paying bills on time. But as the year drew to its close I had paid all bills ahead of schedule, and we established an "A1" credit rating that helped us order more and more merchandise as years went by. My mother-in-law helped out at the store from time to time, and I even had to hire temporaries to get through the busy Christmas season.



Once I joined a catalog group, we put out 10,000 copies every year. If twenty items were shown on a page I would order only what I thought would sell, and it turned out that I was mostly right. If a customer wanted an item that was not in stock, I could always place a special order at a cut rate just to satisfy him. Altogether there were five catalog houses in Philadelphia at this time. We all made out OK.

After the Christmas season we usually had quantities of stock left over which he hope to sell next year. If a customer came into the store looking for one item we would always shown four or five other items, and this always helped sales. One day we received 24 Smith-Corona typewriters—six each of four models—and a young man working for me stocked them on the second floor near a window. He made one stack about 15 feet tall, so it wasn't long before the stack toppled over, sending three typewriters out the window onto Walnut Street. Luckily no one was standing outside the store at that time. Training help how to do things the right way is always time consuming.

One young employee always ate his lunch in the cellar sitting on a toilet. When he finished he would flush the leftovers in a bag. After a while this clogged up the whole drainage system and we had to get a plumber to clear the pipes.

At one time my wife's brother Gerry, who had recently married, was working for me. My mother-in-law also worked part-time during the Christmas season. Gerry ate his lunch every day in the back storeroom. Mom walked through that area later and told me there was a horrible odor there. I traced the odor to a paper bag. It was Gerry's lunch! It smelled horrible! I asked Gerry what was in the bag. He opened it up and showed me two hot dog rolls filled with dog turds. He laughed and laughed, explaining that his wife

was mad at him and made him something special to get back at him. We dumped it in the back alley.

Gerry was known as ETA Moffet. Estimated Time of Arrival Moffet. Some times we would call him at 11 and ask why he was still at home, when he was due at work at 9. He was always oversleeping. He would show up at 10, 10:30, even on occasion at 1 or 2. I didn't mind that much since he was my brother-in-law. The most important thing is to have honest employees because they had to handle a lot of money.

Dorothy (God bless her!) was needed at home to take care of Cynthia and was never really engaged in running the business at the store. I sure could have used her! My sister's son tried to work at the store for a brief time, but I kept noticing that radios were disappearing, so I had to let him go. I was not willing to take chances with help.

As time went by each of my four sons helped out at the store and at home with the catalog. My oldest son, Edward, tried working at the store during the bust season when he was 16 and wasn't pleased with the business, so he asked me if I would mind if he looked elsewhere for a job. I said "Sure!" He wound up at McDonald's Hamburgers for about eight weeks and then asked me for his old job back. I was pleased. I was too easy as a boss—something he would find out when he got more experienced.

No school could have ever taught me what I learned through trial and error. Since I was conservative and cautious, I rarely made errors. Yet I often worked ninety-hour weeks, especially during the Christmas season. Over my 52 years in business I must have served over 50,000 customers and fixed over 40,000 watches. Even when I was home, I usually spent my evenings after dinner in the bedroom, fixing watches.

Finally, after seeing the business boom and saving my extra earnings, I was able to remit the last mortgage payment on our house. At this time I was only renting the store. The property owner using the back of the building for a machine shop, where he stamped out coins and plastic parts for ceiling-high prices. Someone told me that he was selling the building to a parking lot operator who was interested in building another lot in the middle of Jeweler's Row. I was furious when I heard this. I stormed over to the owner's office on Sansom Street and demanded to know why I was not told about his plans to sell. He just said that he did not think I would be interested.

I spoke with their real estate agent to get all the details. I was told that the asking price was a firm \$50,000. Since the machine shop was going to move to a new location in North Philadelphia, that space would be part of the deal. Things were moving much faster than I would have liked, but I told the agent I wanted to buy the property.

Where in the world was I going to get the money? I could take out a mortgage, but the 12% interest rate for Center City was too high. Christmas bills were also due in five months. If I had a good season, though, I could probably earn enough—combined with savings—to pay for the building without a mortgage. I asked each of my suppliers for a five-or-six-month grace period since I expected a busy season. The fact that I had

already paid off the home mortgage and that I had earned a "A1" credit rating made it easy for them to work with me, and the outcome was satisfactory.

Now I had room to put in heavy duty shelving to handle my large purchases at a better cost. I also had two floors upstairs to put stock in. Since I joined a catalog group I had to carry all the items pictured in order to meet demand. Above all, I would keep in stock most any item that was usable in a household: small appliances, radios, fans, typewriters, vacuum cleaners, dishes, stainless steel flatware, shavers, wallets, hair dryers, luggage, binoculars, clocks, watches. With temporaries and family help I was able to put in long hours and have a very good season financially.

I learned from Postiloff that a fine business treats its customers great. I followed his lead to take on Perloff Jewelers, who was my greatest competitor, right next door. Over the years he and I had wars trying to offer the cheapest prices. A half block down the street was Basco Jewelers, who had a better catalog than I could ever produce. Thus, within a half block the three of us were eager beavers, moving all kinds of merchandise. Perloff issued notice to luggage companies that if they sold to me, he would terminate his account with them. They would even get angry if I personally drove to the warehouse to pick up my orders. So we arranged for the companies to deliver orders to another jeweler whose store was two blocks away. I would pick up the merchandise there after hours, and Lew would be none the wiser.

Sterling baby gifts came in approximately thirty different styles and were greatly desired. Most items than were sold were handled through a regular wholesaler. But I was able to get direct deliveries from the factories at the lowest cost due to my high-volume orders, my credit rating, and my catalog business. As usual, we were meeting local competition by making a small profit in large volume business.

One particular popular item was Norelco shavers. My competitor sold them at \$2 over cost. These and other items were loss leaders designed to attract customers. I soon learned that if I direct ordered a gross of shavers to be shipped in May or June, I would not have to pay for them until 10 January. That gave me seven months to sell the shavers and get the money to settle accounts for merchandise that had to be paid for within 30-60 days. Thus, since I moved these items quickly, I had the use of the profits for 5-6 months. As I said before, there is no school nor is there any help from others to learn all these business affairs. It's the same thing with jewelry sales: you just have to learn the hard way, by trial and error.

## New Life in New Jersey

We now owned a house and a store! The store had lots of space, but with three boys and hopes for more children, it was clear that we would need a larger house soon.

Dorothy and her mother spent many a day driving around the suburbs looking for a new, larger house for our growing family. They even roamed throughout Southern New Jersey—an idea that I did not approve because I did not want to have to cross the river. On Sundays, when I did not work, we would pack the three kids into our beat-up Chevy and meet real estate agents at various locations outside Philadelphia. All of them said that we could not afford to live in one of the fancier neighborhoods, and they all showed us crummy houses. I'm actually glad we decided to look at New Jersey, where we found an area called Cherry Hill—merely ten miles away from the store. Here there was a new development called Surrey Place, designed by a builder famous for his good craftsmanship and offering single homes with a choice of interior. It was two blocks from a church and school and swim club!



We decided to move in this development. Selling the house on Price Street was bothersome because we had paid \$10,000 initially but after fees we could not sell it for more than \$8,700. We put a small deposit on a single house on a corner lot that was to be built on 13 August 1965. Today these houses are going for \$180,000. This was a good investment: four bedrooms, two baths and showers, parlor, living room, dining room, kitchen, den, basement, two-car garage, downstairs bathroom and laundry room. Our property was bare outside: there were also no trees or shrubbery until many years later.

This was very exciting! We owned furniture, but hardly enough to fill the new home. After a few years we added a new aluminum patio to the rear of the house and in the rear of the backyard an aluminum shed for bikes, lawn mower and tools. We also built a green-and-white aluminum fence around the back side of the house. This help us well for over 40 years. I also made a twenty-room birdhouse for starlings that was mounted on a pole and hinged at the bottom for cleaning and painting. As the years passed I painted the complete outside of the house twice, planted trees and bushes and many flowers and tomatoes. I planted fifteen poplar trees along the far back edge of our property. These were beautiful trees, but they ended up growing dangerously tall. After many years I bought a tree saw and cut them all down to stumps.

A fir tree grew and grew on a front corner of the house, and I decided to decorate it with Christmas lights every year. However, the tree was much too close to the house and had a bad system and had to be cut down. Many of the other trees I planted also grew



too big, and their roots caused the driveway and sidewalk to crack; most of these had to be cut down.

The squirrels would go up any tree standing near the house, get on the roof and gnaw a passageway into the attic. It was unsettling to hear them scurrying around in the night. So after a while we cut down all the trees right next to the house.

I personally wallpapered the entirety of the interior after fifteen years. It took me a few weeks of working every night after dinner. I installed a built-in water fountain in the kitchen so that the four boys would drink more water and less soda. I drove Neil and Steve to a school to learn about shortwave; all three of us took a test to become qualified for a shortwave license. We built a shortwave room in the cellar and filled it with all kinds of fancy equipment so that we could contact people around the world. I built a fifty-foot aerial about thirty-feet high at the side of the house. To anchor it I poured a 36-inch square concrete base that extended two inches above ground level, and installed motor controls to move the aerial remotely. This sure kept those two boys busy and interested!

A big birthday surprise for me was a new Wurlitzer organ that we placed in a music room I built in the cellar. Another big surprise was being able to buy a full-size slate pool table: a neighbor was transferred to a job overseas and offered us the table for a good price. This also kept the boys busy. We had a family membership at the swim club two blocks away. The boys learned how to swim here, with my help on nights and weekends. At times we had my mother-in-law stay with us at home, to help Dorothy out with housework and to mind the kids if we wanted to go of on a vacation. With five children there was always plenty of work to do around the house.

We really wanted a girl. Our wish finally came true with our fifth pregnancy, but the story has been a sad one since birth. Dorothy kept her at home and we cared for her completely for 41 years. Cynthia lived in the dining room in a bed made especially for her. There was a Hoyer lift next to the bed to help us move her into her wheel chair. As parents both of us were devastated by the problems we faced in caring for her.

When Cynthia was several months old we sought help at the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia. She stayed there for a week, going through all kinds of tests. Since she was born with water in her brain, with a head much larger than normal, they wanted to put a shunt from her brain to her neck to relieve the pressure. They told us to love her as much as we could now because she would not live more than two years. We consulted many other doctors but they could not offer any better news. Cynthia could not crawl, was slow in responding to stimuli, and was not growing normally. We took her to the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential (Director, Glen Doman) in Northwest Philadelphia, where we took classes for several weeks to learn all about her medical problems and to learn the practice of "patterning" so that her arms and legs would not atrophy. I built a special table to do the "patterning" on, then we rounded up sixteen women to come to our home at different hours of the day and night—four at a time—to move her arms and legs back and forth in a crawling motion. We did this for





over a year, but it was clear that no progress was being made, so we decided the procedure was useless. Poor Cynthia was a beautiful girl with no movement.

Dorothy wanted to take Cynthia to Lourdes, France, to seek a Catholic cure. We did a lot of praying, but this did no good. I talked her out of the trip, since I felt that it would be useless as well. We visited many churches in the USA and Canada to say special prayers for her, but none of this proved helpful in the least.

Cynthia ate well and was not a crybaby. Dorothy joined a government program that issued special shots intended to improve

Cynthia's condition. This went on for many years, but Cynthia never showed any improvement. As she grew older we were helped by a state law that allowed her to attend a special day-care facility, five days a week, for no charge. The bus would come by at 8:30 every day to pick her up and return at 4:00. They took good care of her, and Dorothy had some time for herself during the daytime hours.

## Our Children

When I first got married, my mother-in-law told me that I should not expect to live with her family. I was the lucky one! After Dot's father died, I got to take good care of my mother-in-law. After many years of staying with us she died in an upstairs bedroom in 1984.

Since we have five children and needed to take them all over the place, we bought a big Ford station wagon. Of course, in later years the kids would always say that we never took them anywhere. I could easily write page after page listing all of the places we visited. In the summer we would rent a house in Wildwood by the sea for a week, enjoy the ocean and sand and spend the nights on the boardwalk. We also took the kids to Disney World, the World Fairs, the ocean, caves, historical places, and every park available. When my mother-in-law minded the kids, we went to Niagara Falls, California, Florida, Gettysburg, Nova Scotia, England, Germany (twice), Bermuda, Nassau, Vancouver, Alaska, Montreal and countless other interesting places. Of course, in the fall I had to work seven days a week in the store to order and sell the huge amount of items to our catalog customers.

I got my mother-in-law's piano moved to our new house and had it placed in the parlor. I tried to learn how to play, but my wife as normal had no hobbies, except for cooking and taking care of our handicapped daughter. On rare occasions she would come down to the swim club and swim.

Each boy learned piano and organ as a hobby. Each was a good student at school and each had a special personality.

Edward thought he wanted to study chemistry but decided it was too complicated; a teacher in school influenced him to take German history and language. This was at LaSalle College in Philadelphia where he also met the girl he was bound to marry. His high grades awarded him a Fulbright scholarship for a year in Germany. All expenses were paid and he was delighted. His girl was a year behind him in school; she also got a Fulbright Scholarship to Germany. He also studied religion in various parts of the world. When he came back to the USA he went to Ohio State University and finally to Mercer University in Macon, GA. Now he is assistant dean of the college and is still married to Berta, who studied medicine and is now an MD with an office in Macon, GA. They had three children with good talents and education. His oldest son will be married this September and has a great educated wife who is a lawyer. Ted worked at various jobs for the government. Megan is at the university and Ben is still in high school. Edward had a heart problem and had an operation to improve his longevity.

Robert, my second son, had a life-long dream to become a rock star. He still plays at various clubs with his band. He went to college, but quit because he didn't like the teachers. He lives in South Jersey. He has worked at the store for most of the past years, learning to be an expert jeweler and diamond merchant. He completed a gemological course and manages the store with his beautiful wife Trish. They moved to

Sicklerville, NJ in a new home with a swimming pool. They have three children. Trish had a child, Jimmy, before marrying Bob, and together they have had two children: Robert ("Sparky") and Crystal. Sparky is at Rowan College in Glassboro, NJ and works part-time at the store in the summer.

Our third son, Neil, grew up with the shortwave-radio hobby. I made him a square room in the cellar with the best equipment to reach a worldwide audience. He also played the Wurlitzer organ and played at St Peter Celestine Church for a while. After high school Neil got crazy about the Marines. I tried to convince him not to join, to no avail. He signed up for a one-year term of service with three years in the reserves (1977-1981), where he was promoted to Corporal and then to Sergeant. Once back at home he worked with me and Bob at the store. I taught him watchmaking and the jewelry business. He clashed with Bob regularly at the store and after one year he decided to leave the business and become a hand engraver, learning this craft for a year from Al Nardone on Samson Street. He had extra education at Drexel University and graduated with highest honors, completing a five-year program in four years. He was a part-time consultant with RCA and became a member of the Eta Kappa Nu Electrical Engineering Honors Society. He then attended Syracuse University to study graduate computer architecture and completed a work-study program at IBM (January 1983 - May 1984).

Technical advisor and designer (July 1983 - May 1984). Then he left for California and worked for Daisy Systems Corporation and created a similar product line. Executive Management. Negotiated with Hitachi and LSI Logic, was on nine-member design team (May 1984-September 1985). He earned a MGA in Finance in 1987 at the Wharton School. He moved to California to take a job at Hambrecht Quist, but after a while he decided he wanted to get back into the jewelry business. He wanted to open up his own custom-design jewelry business and asked me for financial backing. I looked into the proposed deal and decided that it was going to be a loser, so nothing ever came of this idea. Then Neil and another person opened up their own venture capital company. They had beautiful offices with secretaries in downtown San Francisco and made out very well for several years. But when the market crashed their operation went down the tubes and they had to close their doors. A couple of years later he found another partner and set up a similar company.



He finally met the girl of his dreams and came back home to get his MBA at Wharton. He expected her to follow him to Philadelphia, but there were problems. He did not try for marriage for some reason and she broke up with him. Whatever the problems were, she went to a college in Chicago because her test grades were not good enough for Wharton. Despite these personal problems and his severe back pains from a car

accident, he managed to persevere and graduate from Wharton with the highest grades.

When he returned to California, he met another beautiful girl who was recently divorced. She had a four-year-old son, Eric. We flew out to San Francisco for their wedding. He made very good money at his new business and bought a big, beautiful home in the hills outside San Francisco. He finally sired a little girl, Sarah, who is the joy of his life. Neil surprised me one day by showing up unannounced at our house to show us Sarah. He was such a proud father.

Then there was our fourth son, Steven, who was born at our original house in Philadelphia. He had a serious illness as a baby. He was a great student. He finished high school in Cherry Hill as we moved towards a better life. Steven attended Drexel University, where he helped create a students' DUsers group—one of the largest Macintosh groups in the country. One of his collaborators was Denise Walls, an English major from Williamsport, PA and future wife. Steven received an award from Mayor Goode for his work with computers. He also put in some time at the store and took a special course on diamonds that qualified him for certification from the Gemological Institute of America. He did not stay with the business, but rather made his career in computers. After he married Denise he lived two miles from our home until they bought a house with a swimming pool in Sicklerville, NJ. Steven worked initially for Composure Room Computers, then for Fuji Graphic Systems, and then as director of information technology at Endless Pools. Denise is going back to school to earn a degree to teach high-school English.

I was lucky to have four sons who have made good lives so far. No smoking, no drinking, no dope. Our fifth child, who was given only two years to live, is now 43 and is totally disabled. She lives at a special home run by the state of New Jersey.

## “The Rusty Years”

I fell down in the den and busted up my left shoulder, then years later I fell down the steps and did the same to my right shoulder. Times turned sour. About 4 1/2 years ago Dorothy started showing signs of Alzheimers. I took care of her for three years. Every day I left her at a day care center at 10 am so that I could go to work. I picked her up every day at 4:30 pm. When she and I were home I would care for her, make her do exercises, and prepared good meals for her. One day I tripped on the electric cord at her bed in the den and broke my hip. That’s when you really see stars! Prior to that accident I had a chunk of my colon removed, an appendix taken out, and Lymes disease. The sciatic nerve in my right leg gave me serious problems, but after the fourth epidural it seems to have become a little better. But I am losing feeling in my legs beneath the knees, especially in the left foot. I went to see more doctors, but none could offer me any help.

While I was in the nursing home recuperating from hip surgery, it was clear that the family could not handle Dorothy. We had her put in a bed right next to mine. During physical therapy I tried to get her to walk along with me, but that was not successful. It worked for a while, but the nurses and I could not bear the problems getting her out of bed and up on her feet. When I returned home I got an electric lift to go up and down the stairs so that we could sleep and shower. Changing her diaper was a real chore; I tried to make her use the toilet every 2 hours. Against all of my principles I committed her to a nursing home for proper care and to get some freedom from the worsening situation. It cost \$15,000 a year to take care of her; that comes to \$12 an hour.

One can be admitted under Medicare, but one must be broke and have very little



resources. My plan to save all of my life for the golden years proved to be flawed; we have rusty years now. If one had bought full-time care insurance earlier in life, this would cover most of the expenses. Medicare and Blue Cross do not. All of my personal medical bills have been paid by Blue Cross and Medicare.

I used a walker to get around, since my balance was not good. On 24 January 2010, while shopping in Shop Rite, I

completely collapsed on the floor and suffered a broken femur bone that took six months to heal. I spend eight weeks in a nursing home—I shared a room with Dorothy—and could only hop on one foot. For eight weeks after that I could only use my right leg half of the time.

I can now walk around with a mini-walker. On 1 August I was able to drive a car again, very carefully. Many doctors checked me out with a brain scan, MRI, ultrasound, and CT scan for my legs and veins. Two years ago I was diagnosed with an enlarged prostate and had a biopsy of the prostate last week. In December 2009 I had cataracts in my eyes repaired.

I have a woman come to the house three times a week for four hours to clean house, wash clothes, change bedding, and drive me to the nursing home to see Dorothy. This must be paid for through Homekeepers at \$14.50 per hour.

Very carefully I drive to the store to help our my son and daughter-in-law. I've been in the same location for 52 years and have fixed over 40,000 watches. I still repair watches at home, after dinner.



I again had physical therapy and water therapy for the past four weeks, but my time with medicare is now used up. Therapy took place three times a week for two hours, from 9:30 to 11:30 am. I can certainly say that it has not really helped much.

I did go to the gym every night after work for a half-hour. This exercise in the water for sixteen years must have helped me reach 82 years. I still exercise somewhat at home.

Twenty months ago, while lifting Dorothy out of her chair, I injured one special disc in my spine and had to wear a back brace for six weeks to let it repair itself. In the meantime this problem has caused my spinal nerves to touch wrongly, leading to spinal menosis. As I write this, I can only say that it could have been much worse.

The following poem states my personal feelings for my wife:

All I need  
Is your arms around me  
when I fall asleep,  
your smile when I awake, and  
the promise of your love  
in my life  
til I run out of days on this earth

Or my favorite song:

It's a long, long time



from May to September  
and the days grow short  
when you reach November  
And these few precious days  
I spend with you  
These precious days  
I will spend with ...



## Miscellaneous Notes

1 July 1981            store incorporated  
10 April 1989        new rear bathroom \$2000  
October 1996        new roof and shingles

27 August 1953      Price Street 15-year term  
14 May 1957        Price Street  
4 August 1965      Price Street (sold for \$9250)

first bed bought at Strawbridge's for \$327.24

601 East Locust  
\$80 weekly pay  
28 February 1953    lease  
\$50 rent  
13 August 1965      Saddle Lane settlement

Leona seven children  
Ed Jaroll three years in Florida  
40-year-old Leona did six years at Clinton State Reform  
Leona also served six months in Florida

November and December we worked seven days a week. Wednesday and Friday we stayed open until 9  
Normally we worked 9 to 6 six days a week. We took one week off in July for vacation

During four years of dating we saw many movies. Since being married we've seen maybe two or three. We never went to night clubs. We were a busy family all the time.

My greatest competitor was next door. Perloff Jewelers was fine business that treated customers great. I followed suit and we often had price wars as we tried to undersell each other. One-half block away was our biggest competitor, Basco Jewelers; they had a much better catalog than the one I could produce. The three of us were busy beavers who strove to move merchandise quickly. To get all this merchandise at wholesale cost I needed to sell volume, and I never failed to do so.

Lew Perloff notified a prominent luggage company that he would cancel his account if they sold products to me. I did an end-around either by picking up the merchandise directly from the warehouse or having them deliver the goods to another jeweler two blocks away. Lew never figured this out.

Most items were distributed through a regular wholesaler, especially electrical appliances. Since I constantly placed high-volume orders for my catalog sales, I was able to get direct deliveries from the factories at the lowest possible cost. We met local competition head on and made small profits through volume orders and rapid turnover.



Items that were always in high demand were the thirty-some varieties of Sterling Baby Gifts, and Norelco shavers. All of my competitors were selling these items at two bucks over cost. Most other items were loss leaders just to attract customers. One day I realized that if I ordered a gross of shavers in May or June and had these shipped directly to my store, I would not have to pay anything until the next January. I had seven months to sell the products! With this money I could pay for the other merchandise that demanded payment within thirty to sixty days. All I had to do was make sure that I was constantly moving all of this merchandise.

There is no school at which you can learn these strategies, and no one could offer you any help. The businessman has to learn the hard way, through trial and error.

Our normal catalog output was 10,000 copies every year. Ten percent of the catalogs were mailed to our regular customers. Although I was required to carry all of the items that were advertised on the pages, I was careful only to order the products that I thought could be sold easily. On the few occasions where a customer wanted an item I did not carry in stock, I could always rush-order it at a discounted price to the customer, just to keep his business. Altogether there were five catalog houses in Philadelphia in the 1960s.

Our season ended every year on Christmas Day. After that we had to take stock of everything we did not sell and entice customers to buy these products through suggestive selling. If someone came into the store to buy one thing, we would usually show them five or six others to improve sales. One day we received 24 Smith-Corona typewriters: six pieces of four different models.