

DENNIS WINNER/BOB WINNER

Q. Say your name, your birth date, and where you live.

A. I'm Dennis Winner. I was born March 29th, 1942. I live at 117 Saunders Parkways in Asheville.

A. And I am Bob Winner. I was born January 22, 1947. And I live at 440 _____r's Place.

Q. So, you are sort of neighbors. O.K. Well, first of all, tell me—we are here because this is a building that was next to the building that was your father's store. So, tell me some about how your father got to Asheville and how he started the store here.

A. My father grew up in Savannah, Georgia. He was the son of an immigrant, small shopkeeper. When he graduated from high school and went to work for a cousin in Hazelhurst, Georgia, in their store. Meanwhile, his oldest brother, Joe Winner, had formed a bottle store and owned a small store in Silva. When Uncle Joe got married, he asked Dad to come up and run the store on his honeymoon. And Dad did, and while he was up here, he then got employed by Chester Cogburn, who was a lawyer, at that time in Hayward County. And had been appointed receiver of a small store in Canton called The Hole in the Wall. Had been appointed receiver to liquidate the inventory in that store; and he hired my father to do that. So, Dad went over there, and decided that it was an opportunity for him to start. He had saved up a couple thousand dollars in Cullowhee, and he borrowed another couple of thousand from relatives. It was in 1932, in the depth of the Depression. And he bought the store and all the inventory and equipment and everything that was in it—not the building—from the receiver—that's how he got started. He stayed a bachelor until 1940. And during that time he expanded that store in Canton, and started a little store in Waynesville, and one in Brevard.

Q. Were they all called Hole in the Wall?

A. No. He changed the one in Canton to Harry Winner, Jr. Department Store after he expanded it the second time. Because it was tiny. The original one was smaller than this room. And then it became Winner's at some point there in the late '30's. I don't know what he called the stores in Brevard. I suspect, knowing his pattern, that he bought going businesses, and left the names of whatever the stores were. He met mother at the Synagogue here, and they married in August of 1940. And Mother moved the camp. But she made an agreement with him—she grew up in New York, and was a big difference between New York and Canton in those days—not anymore. LAUGHTER. She made an agreement with him that when their first child got to school age, that he would move back. So I came along, and when I was 4, we moved back. And Dad, by that time had saved some more money, we borrowed a ton of money, sold the stores in Waynesville and Brevard, or liquidated them—I'm not sure which—and used the money for that and just started the store here from scratch. Rented the building from where we started here—

Q. This building?

A. Right. The building next door to us, that has little shops, a chocolate shop or something. And the time that he opened it, there were 4 stories in the building plus the mezzanine. We only opened 2 stores, and he also subleased the ladies shoe department in the first floor and beauty shop, which I think opened at the time he opened the store. That was the only thing other than storage on the third floor at that time. A few years later, he moved all the women's departments up on the third floor. And, then, ultimately, when I was in college, opened a girls' department—high school-type of girls' department. On the 4th floor. And he was there until 1972, when he sold the business to some people from Tennessee. He had always maintained medium to high-quality clothing in the stores. They downgraded it substantially, and that business didn't last

long. They kept the name, but that business went out of business 2 years later. So that is a brief history.

Q. I am going to just quickly—because this noise is really bad. I want to see if we can get closer. Bob, do you have anything to add to that?

A. Well, I came along about the same time as the store. We both spent a lot of time working at the store, to a million young people. Dennis sold shoes on the second floor. And I sold boys clothes to the unforgettable characters in this town. A lot of people our age remember Pearl McCurray, who was my boss, selling boys clothes. She clothed a lot of boys of this town. There was a big re-do of the first floor, and—about '63 or '62. The men's department, which was also a subleased department, subleased to a guy named Steve Vance. Who was also Jewish. Came from Atlanta, originally I think. He and my father always mentioned that they were born on exactly the same day, same year. In Georgia. He didn't make it as long as our father. But that use to be the main part of the store on the first floor on the right as you entered. After this re-do, the women's work clothes and swimsuits and that kind of stuff was there; and the men's department moved into the adjacent building, which is now part of the atrium that's outside the _____. And I guess that was the main move at that time, besides opening up the junior department on the fourth floor, which had previously been used for storage. I don't know if this is of any historical interest, but it would be to people who have been in the Jewish community for awhile. S. A. Vance was the brother of Annette Sterndom. And that is how he came to _____. And he was a bachelor until his early 50's. Then he got married and a couple of years later something happened. He had a heart attack or a stroke, and died.

Q. But did the store keep running, or the store closed?

A. For awhile it ran—actually it kept running. I can't remember if we just took the business over. For awhile Tommy Neal ran it, because Tommy Neal, before he opened his store worked for S.A. Vance. But I still, this year I threw away a raincoat this past year that I got from S.A. Vance before—when we had it before we got out of it in 1972.

Q. So around what year did Vance die?

A. About '62 or '63. '64. I was gone to college.

Q. So when you all were little, the store was just 2 stories?

A. I don't remember that. It was 3 stories most of the time. And my memory was that it was the late '50's that it went to 4. Because I think I was still working there, selling men's and children's shoes there from the time I was 15 until I graduated from high school. And I am pretty sure there was four before I left to go to college. My mom was working there and they put in a girls' department.

Q. Did you all kind of, as little children, run around in the store? In the unused parts?

A. In the used parts probably, and all of it. And it was also, about the time he was talking about, on the second, only at Christmastime.

A. I don't think so. Because they moved the shoe department there.

A. I first worked in that toy department when I was 12, during one of the Christmas seasons.

A. I can remember doing things like coming into the stores on Thanksgiving and putting red tags on clothes the day after Thanksgiving sale, or some holiday like that. I remember—you only had sales seasonally then. I can remember the first time that someone rang a free Christmas sale from Sears. And my father said "This is a very bad thing. A bad idea." And it was to me the point that signaled a C-change? In retail business. Where now, they are on "fake sale" all the time. Where things are "marked down" for prices that they never sold for, stuff like that... At

that point, I remember him saying also when Sears opened seven days a week, that he would quit before he sold seven days a week. Then there of course the big thing that changed were the shopping centers. There was a time when I thought about going into the business. I don't think we would have survived. Because I don't think we didn't have the capital to build the store in a shopping center. And an individual businessman like that couldn't have competed with these nationals chains.

Q. Now are you talking about a shopping center like West Gate or a shopping center like the Mall?

A. West Gate type shopping center was a store. Malmorche? Was down there. But they had a whole lot more capital than we did. And I don't think—we couldn't have done that. We would have stayed up town eventually, I expect, we would have gone under. As it turned out, since I didn't go into the store and Dad 's health turned bad, and so first thing he did was liquidate the store in Canton. That was done in 1968. He had in the meantime, bought two other stores and sold them already. One was a small store called Taylor and Henderson's and one was a very large store in Salisbury, Baystockers?? And there main department store down there, and it ended up, we weren't in there 3 or 4 years in the early '60's. I was a law student, when it burned down. But when Dad's health started turning bad, we liquidated the store in Canton and stayed on for 4 more years and finally found a buyer for the store here. If we hadn't, I think within another year or two the most, we would have liquidated the store here.

Q. So did he keep a store in Canton the whole time?

A. Kept the store in Canton the whole time.

Q. Who ran that store?

A. At first, our Uncle Hymie, at first.

Q. Oh, is that Gene's father?

A. No. Gene's father is Joe.

Q. Oh, Hyman Winner—that was Jay Winner's father.

A. That's right. Hyman Winner ran that store until there was one sibling left in Savannah. And her husband and she owned a children's shoe store down there. And Uncle Henry died in 1964; and Uncle Hymie bought our aunt out and moved back to Savannah and stayed in that store the whole rest of his career. Dad then hired a manager, who ran the Canton store '64 to '68. Dad, even when Hymie was married—never a week went by that Dad didn't go and spend a day there.

Q. So, was it also called Winner's?

A. It was called—he also had _____ in a men's store there, even later, called Nichol's. That ended sometime in the late '70's.

Q. How did that happen? Do you know?

A. He and Nick Nichols and two others, as bachelors in Canton together, shared an apartment or a house or rented some place together and became fast friends. And they were friends until they died. He died before Dad. And they had two sons. I don't know where one of them ended up. But the younger one, I ran into him recently. I didn't recognize him, but he recognized me. He's a tax lawyer in Raleigh. Dad, I think, just put some money in that business to help him out.

Q. How did he wind up getting the one in Salisbury? What was that about?

A. He just bought it. He was trying to turn it into a chain.

A. Pay Striker _____

Q. Were they Jewish?

A. Yes. And that was a pretty big store. At least bigger than our store here.

A. Dad use to go down there pretty often when I was say, junior high school. And sometimes I was with him. And it was shaped—any modern store is shaped wide and not deep. And it was shaped deep and not wide. It was very narrow. It was not in a good position. It turned out we broke even.

Q. What happened with the fire?

A. I don't know. We'll never know. I was in college in law school.

Q. Was your dad insured, or did he take a hit?

A. Yes, he was insured. But we didn't own any of these buildings. All we owned was in _____.

Q. So Bob answered one of the questions, which was When your dad would go back and forth to Canton or to Salisbury or to these places, did you go? And do you have any particular memories of incidents that happened, or people, or customers or—

A. I can tell you this: Dad—it still happens—still does, less often than it use to—that people would come up to me—and still do—and talk about Harry Winter and that store. And mostly they were stories like “I came home from the war. I didn't have any money. Harry brought me into the store, gave me a suit of clothes, and told me to pay him when I had the money.” And he did that kind of thing a lot. When he was over there. He couldn't do it in a bigger store, here. We ran a typical kind of credit kind of store here. Of course it was not credit cards. But when he was running the small store by himself, he did that a lot. He was always a very generous person, and people, as I said, people still come up to me every now and then, and say something about it.

A. I think his most favorite thing to do in the store, it would sound like, wedding gowns. We had a bridal department; and sometimes he would actually go to New York and specially buy a wedding gown for somebody. If the timing was right. He had the biggest weddings in Asheville, and he was competing with much larger stores. Ivey's. Belk's wasn't that much of a

competitor at that time. Ivey's and Baumer's, they were much larger and better capitalized stores. Dad always told me his prices couldn't beat them, his prices were equal. The way that I make it is to give the people better service. He had great taste, and people would trust him to go up and buy their wedding gowns. He did that a lot. He was like—with this gal I mentioned, Pearl—one of the big times of year was back to school. And at that time, if you were going off to college, a lot of guys would get an outfit. And I saw her—I marveled this, because you know, I could sell a pair of blue jeans or something—but she could take a kid—this would be the early '60's—and in 45 minutes sell them \$700 worth of clothes. You know, you had to have a suit, a sport coat and shirts and ties and all this stuff that no one wears any more, in college. And basically, she told them what they were suppose to wear, because she kept up with what was going on. I also remember an incident where Dennis called back from Chapel Hill, and told Dad that he had to start selling Bass _____. Do you remember that?

A. Yeah .. LAUGHTER. ? I've still got them all.

Q. John Carrolls had the women's. They use to have only one store. And they were just on sort of the elbow of these road terms and Dad got the exclusive on these things. And I can remember when I was in high school, basically we were a quote, meaning an upper limit to what you can buy. And so we would order these things, and they would all be sold before they came in. And the job of the guy running the shoe department was to call the people up on the list and say "it's time for you to come in and pick up your shoes." Of course, as I remember, those shoes were about \$13 a pair. At that point, instead of \$85 they are now.

Q. Who ran the shoe department? Was there someone that you remember in each department?

A. That department, until I was 16, was run by a man of the name Dickinson. Sloan Dickinson. And he died when I was a junior in high school. It was in the summertime, and I was out as

junior counselor at a camp in Mills River. And Dad had to call me in. Because I was the only other person who knew how to run the department. And he raised me—before that he had been paying me a quarter an hour—he raised me to a dollar an hour. And that summer I ran the department and trained a woman, along with him, about how to run the department. And she ran it.

A. Most of the time I was in high school at that time in Jim West. And he ended up going to Tott's ? for awhile and then going out_____. In the long summers of high school when I was working there, and there would be days when I wouldn't see a customer all day. I would sit there in the shoe department and talk, and me and Pearl would crack the whip about the size of the shirts or something. It was a long time before I could buy a pair of blue jeans. And it was almost like I owed him on the blue jeans for selling them. I was probably 15, or 20 years, after graduating from high school that I could buy a pair of jeans and put them on and stand it. I've still got a pair of shoes that I wear, and I wear a pair of real cordovan saddle shoes that I got from that department. I think I was out practicing law in 1968. The most memorable aspect of the shoe department was we had an x-ray machine. A fluoroscope.

A. And never got sued!

A. I'm surprised our feet don't glow in the dark, because every time we would come in, you would stand there and wiggle your toes and you could see how the shoes fit and all that and see the bones of your feet. At some point, somebody informed us that those things were not a good idea.

Q. Well, I know that your dad had competitors. And I know for a fact, from talking to Betty Pollack, that her father had a fluoroscope machine, or whatever it was called. And, did he ever talk either in the store or at home—was he worried about competitors?

A. I once asked him "Isn't it too bad that we have Baumers and Ivey's?" And he said "No. He said he absolutely did not want to be the only store" and why. Which is a lesson in commercial and in general. Because people come where there is a lot of options, and you just have to attract enough of them. It was not all-consuming. Though he did talk about it at home some. And he worked, until he quit when he was 62. In 1972 he worked 72-hour weeks, every week. And before he got married, he said it was more like 80-hour weeks. He—I can't remember but one incident that he got mad. And that was at—there is an ordinance of the City of Asheville, that has never been enforced but one time. And that was against us and it was because of a manager at _____ causing it to be enforced. And that is if you have any kind of a liquidation sale, the ordinance says you cannot bring in merchandise that wasn't already there, to sell. And when we were going out of business and we had the big sale, they went up there and got the city counsel to enforce that. Most of the time, he was very friendly with the _____, very active in the merchants association and was president of that for a good while. Kind of a human story, which I may not have exactly right, but does have something to do with this relationship _____. In the '60's, during the civil rights explosion, there was an intersection with this refurbishing of the first floor of our store and redecorating and putting in of an automatic door. Previously, our elevator was operated by a black woman named Irene. And Dad decided it was time for black people to have other kinds of jobs, other than janitorial and running the elevator. So, he did several things. He went to the other merchants, and convinced them that this was right, and that they should all put a black person in a sales position, essentially on the same ____.

Q. Was it through the merchants association? Or just the other Jewish businesses?

A. I don't know—it was probably other businesses where it was feasible to do that. Bon Marche ? and Ivey's—

Q. The Man's Store?

A. No. That was pretty small.

Q. So bigger stores? John Carroll?

A. Yes, but he convinced them. And so coincidentally, this elevator operator was going to be out of a job, because of our nation. He did this and then he had a discussion with her and told her what he was going to do, if she was willing to do it. But he warned her, that there might be some ugly things, that there would be. And she became a selling person as our _____ right on the first floor.

A. No, fourth floor. She moved that when they opened that. That's when he moved her.

A. Yeah, so all of that, the new elevator and the fourth floor, junior department, and breaking the color blind, all happened at one time.

A. Before that, and he did this by himself—he didn't say anything to anybody, he just did it—but it was a big deal in those days. He put an African-American manikin in the window, which was the first person in Asheville to do that. I don't remember anything being said about that. People have a hard time putting their head back into that Asheville was true South, it wasn't deep South.

A. No one was segregated. We had in the store colored _____.

A. Actually, when he opened the store, there were colored water fountains, and he immediately took those out back in the '40's, and bought one modern, at that time, electric, ice-water machine and took the black and white label out. And he grew up in Savannah in an area that was an obvious racist and some of his siblings were racist. But he wasn't. He didn't try to push things before their time, but when he decided it was time, then he did. There are other stories we could tell you about that.

Q. Please do.

A. Well, I'll tell you a different story about—happened to be a black person who is still pretty well-known around here has told it himself. And this will tell you something about our dad's character: And that is Herb Watts of the national city police force. Herb Watts' dad worked for our dad as a janitor. And when Herb was in high school, Herb would work a little bit part time in the store. During that time, his dad died. And I didn't know this until Herb told me this, many many years later. Dad pulled him into his office, and said I want to do what I can to help you. What I want you to do is for you to work after school and on Saturdays; and I will pay the same full wage that your dad made, when he was here. And Herb did that, worked for us until sometime later on he quit. But that was the kind of person he was. And he never said anything to us or anybody else about it. Herb told us that when Dad died. Dad was what you would call today a hands-on manager. He was always practically on the floor. Almost never in his office he had a little office on the second floor. He added up how far he walked every day. But he waited on customers, he was always on the front of the store and took 20 minutes off for lunch. The only thing I remember him doing at home, was he often did the artwork for his ads, unless there was some sort of crude-done mats. He could draw these fashion things just _____ big sheets. He laid out all the ads himself. He tended—I don't know that he didn't worry about it—but he didn't talk about it that much.

Q. Now with things kind of like the racial situation, did you sort of learn his attitude from his role model, or did he talk to you about that stuff at home?

A. We had these discussions around women about events, for as long as I can remember. We were very current events before he _____. And I guess that is the way, clearly, the biggest influence on me was getting involved in public service all those years. I'm sure my sister—that

was partly because of my dad and partly because of my mother—they both were interested people in what was going on. So that was the typical topic of conversation. I remember the date of the early civil rights struggle before any of the laws got passed in the '60's. The argument about property rights versus human rights milled around the dinner table. And not in a didactic way, but just in a sort of 'that's what happened'. There was an incident in the '50's that—I don't remember exactly when this was—when I was in high school, that there use to be a very active organization here called National Conference of Christians and Jews, that was always a protestant chairman, a Jewish chairman and a catholic chairman. The main function was to put on what was called "brotherhood breach". And they would have a banquet. And Dad one year was the Jewish chairman, and they had invited a choir from one of the African-American churches to sing as the entertainment for this banquet, which was to be held at the George Vanderbilt Hotel. Well, the George Vanderbilt Hotel would not let, even let the black choir sing at this banquet. And Dad was very insistent that they not back down on this. And when the George Vanderbilt would not back down on this, they moved the banquet to some church in the area so they could still have this African-American group sing to them. You got a pretty strong sense of what was right and wrong.

Q. Do you actually remember any incidence that he experienced of anti-Semitism in the store or in Asheville or anywhere?

A. I'm sure there were some, 'cause we all had some, but I don't think there was ever anything—A. I do remember this bizarre thing that happened—some guy comes into the store from Scotland, and he wants to see dad, and was wondering whether they were related. This guy's name was Guinn. And a lot of people think Winner or Wiener were somehow chopped up and my dad assured him that it was very unlikely. Apparently, it was thought that our name must

have been Viner or Finer and changed at Ellis Island, but it was actually Vinner. My aunt found a document, that is the real name on it, and it was Vinner. _____ our first cousin has our father's father's name on it.

Q. And where were they from?

A. They were from Filaroos ? from a little town which names Vixlam ? and I've got it at home somewhere—near the city of Pince ?

Q. So did you all have any anti-Semitic incidents growing up here?

A. I can't remember much. Nothing specific. I'm sure somewhere along somebody called me a dirty Jew or something—the only thing I can remember that was clearly anti-Semitic was the Key Club ____ They would not take in any Jews.

Q. What was the Key Club?

A. They don't have it any more at Asheville High. The Key Club was a service club, a junior Kiwanis. And they would not allow any Jews in, and never did. I think one, actually our step-cousin, back in the early '50's, that they had. But that was the only one I know of, so—

Q. Who is your step-cousin?

A. Max Krone. Whose dad owned on Middle Mountain.

Q. And now how are you related to him?

A. Max, Sr. married our aunt, after his two children and first wife died.

Q. Aunt on your father's side or—

A. Yes. And some of the people who were in the student leadership who weren't Jewish, two of whom are here in Asheville now—Larry McDevitt and Bob Long, and a few others, got very offended, and when they were asked into the Key Club as a result of that, refused to go in. And

that was when the Junior Civitan was started. That is the only incident I can remember involving anti-Semitism.

A. As I recall, as late and recently as when I graduated high school, which was in 1964, shortly before that—and this could be wrong, so you should check this out before—there was a Jewish quota for admission to Duke, which effected the thinking about where to go to college. Because there was a person in my class who got an Andrew Duke scholarship. Which at some point—

Q. Did you go to Duke?

A. No. But there were plenty of Jewish people at Duke. I dated a couple of Jewish girls.

Q. I'm sure you were right at some point. But I always heard that Duke was sort of —all the Jews in the North—there were no state colleges to go to, or there were too many quotas up there, so they came to Duke. I mean I am not sure about that.

A. I don't think there was a big population of Jewish people at Duke during the '60's. Of course the Morehead scholarship—I was a finalist, I wouldn't have gotten it anyway I don't think. But I was told in no uncertain terms—a friend of mine who had won it, who was older than I, that there was no way I was going to _____. The person that ran the _____ at the time was very anti-Semitic and that there would be no way _____.

There was one person before me, Charlotte, who was better qualified or would have, I feel sure, since he had everything he needed, if he hadn't been Jewish, who I know would have got it—but that changed somewhere along the line.

Q. I assume you got most of your clothes from your dad's store?

A. Oh!-- I just saw a movie last night which reminded me—where Julia Allen plays a rookie who becomes a front for whiter-than-black _____. And he meets this beautiful young woman who is in the TV business and they're eating together for the first time and sort of introducing

themselves. And she says she's from Connecticut from the kind of family where raising her voice was a great sin. And he said "In my family, buying retail is a great sin." So that sort of hits mine. I came back from overseas from a job in 1972—still working in summers. I had to go buy a pair of trousers at another store. And I was in sticker shock. I just couldn't do it. And didn't do it, for awhile. It was just easy as a graduate student _____.

Q. But that was sort of my question: Do you remember the first time you ever bought clothing that wasn't at your father's store? Did you feel some kind of guilt about that?

A. I'm sure I didn't feel any guilt about it, at all. No.

Q. But it was probably after your father's store had closed? It wasn't while it was open?

A. I'm sure as long as we had it, I wouldn't. You got a big discount from Dad. But when I got up in the Men's _____, I think he still gave me a small discount.

Q. So what are some of the other, particularly Jewish stores you remember? Or were you friends with some of their kids? What was the downtown scene like?

A. Well, the eldest Kaminski child was my age. Janie _____ TYPIST'S NOTE:
THERE IS A LOUD HUMMING NOISE IN THE BACKGROUND, POSSIBLY
EQUIPMENT? POSSIBLY AIR-CONDITIONING?

But I remember having to go find her father at some point, and I went into Baumers so rarely, I didn't know anything about where anything was. Someone told me where to find him, I wouldn't know. In my high school class, there was 17 Jewish people. Which was unusual. The year before was like 2 or 3. Of the 17 people, only two of them, other than me, were children of Jewish merchants. One was Lowell Poleman, whose dad owned a furniture store. And the other one was Lynn Lackman, whose man owned a small jewelry store over on Patton Avenue. I cannot think—there may have been another one—I cannot think of anybody now whose dad was

a merchant then. _____ Larry Brody, whose father ran the Stork's Nest Toy Store on Griffin Park. Karen Roth, whose father had some jewelry stores. Sandy Shapiro's father was a dentist. Larry Burdin _____ Allen Barton _____ jewelers. Bernie Gordon was _____. He had this very deep voice. When I was in AZA, at some point I became president of AZA, and it seems to me that Bernie Gordon and Allen Barton were the adult supervisors or whatever, for AZA. And Bernie told me this later—I don't remember—but he asked me to look out for him, and I must have done so or something, so when it came time for me to get an engagement ring, he did right. Ellen Rismekof was behind me. Sheryl Rubenstein—I don't remember—

Q. Sold chemicals.

A. Nicky Chandler was in my class. Chandler's various food stores. Trudy was in her class? Last I heard she was a stewardess in Hawaii or some such place. Somewhere foreign. Of the 17 of us, out of my high school class, I think there are only 3 _____.

Q. Is Paul an attorney?

A. He is a non-practicing attorney.

Q. Do you remember any particular events that happened downtown? Somebody famous that came to town or—

A. Oh yeah. Our Christmas parades. Hopalong Cassidy came. I remember Thad Menea introducing me to Bob Hope, that came here for something. Merchant's Association maybe had him in a parade. I was real small then.

A. Was there a movie actress named Catherine Grayson? She came here and had her hair done in our beauty parlor and I had an autographed newspaper picture of this event or something. I have no idea where that is. If it didn't get in the trash _____.

A. And then a local thing I can remember, that Dad had some kind of a give-away once, an autographed football of Charlie Justice. And he got him to autograph two of them and gave me one. And I kept it—I still had it when I went off to college. But whatever happened to it, I don't know. It got gone. By that time. That was still there when I got back from _____, and by that time—the ink had faded so much against that dark brown leather, that you could barely make it out.

A. We use to—the Merchant's Association, Christmas parade use to come down Hayward Street, so we had a good vantage point, from the second floor windows.

Q. Was there a Winners float?

A. I don't recall. I don't think so.

Q. Do you remember any particular or regular customers? Or customer stories that were kind of wonderful stories?

A. Not off the top of my head. I can tell you one story, something that Dad did to me. Not of historical interest, but when I was in junior high school, in the 9th grade I guess, we walked to town. _____Thad Atkins_____ Well, one day I come down town and I walked into the store and Dad is standing at one of the counters on the first floor. I come over, and he said "I need your help with something. I went to the doctor today, and I have to take a blood sample." And he pulls up this big syringe and rolls up his sleeve—he was very subtle about this—he says "Would you just hold my arm while I do the _____" and he plunges the syringe into his arm—which is a fake syringe, obviously, and you press a button that looks like blood is coming out. And I almost fainted.

Q. So was he a pretty big joker?

A. Occasionally. He had a good sense of humor. He and S. A. Vance use to joke that they were going to publish a book of jokes that they had heard over the years, and they were going to call it Not for _____. And I can remember that. He did not like, however, the use of coarse language. Like nowhere.

Q. Speaking of mixed company, did your sister work in the store?

A. I'm sure she must have, probably—

Q. Cause I was wondering, was it only the boys who were supposed to work?

A. Time she got old enough to do that, I was gone.

A. Yeah, I think she did. And I remember, I was living in London, England in '72 and she came over for a visit. And I went out to Heathrow to pick her up. She didn't even say hello. The first thing she said to me was "They sold the store." And I didn't even know it was for sale. I had been gone for a couple of years. But yeah, I am pretty sure that she worked at the store. And, you know, retailing changed so much after that. Pearl told me later that she had always figured that I would take the store, and she was very disappointed when I didn't come back. You know, as you have said in your work, virtually all of the children of that merchant generation have become professionals and that kind of stuff. There is a reason for that. That is retail is hard. And it became more and more of a rat race. I don't think it was my father's perception that it became a rat race; I think it DID become a rat race. And I think it became fundamentally less honest.

A. I think he was disappointed when I didn't go into the business. But at the time that he got out of it, I think he was no longer disappointed. I think he knew that the small merchant was—not the small merchant—the small shop might still be able to exist, but the medium-size merchant couldn't exist any longer. And it hasn't. Stores like Winners just don't exist anymore.

Q. Well, I have one minute left, but do you remember, however old you were when you sort of make those decisions, what was going through your mind? Did you feel like it was a hard decision to decide if you were going to go into the store?

A. I don't know what caused me not to want—I mean I didn't have anything I wanted to do. Because I decided to be a lawyer after I had decided not to be a merchant. I don't know why, what caused me not to want to do it. And I think I came much closer than Bob did. I don't think Bob ever had any—

A. It never crossed my mind. I always _____ with the sciences.

Q. I think we are out of tape, guys.