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Interviewed by
Mildred Finger
DAVID CRYSTAL, INC. is one of the oldest businesses in the ready-to-wear industry. Founded in about 1905 by David Crystal as a small family business, it became a public corporation in 1964 and was acquired by General Mills, Inc. in 1969. At that time, the volume was $27 million.

It is today a business whose volume is several hundred millions. There are seven or eight divisions, including Izod, of the famous alligator logo.

Vincent De Paul Draddy joined the firm in 1934, and became its head in the early 1940's, when David Crystal retired. Mr. Draddy was given the title of President in 1951, and became Chairman of the Board in 1961. At that time Jack Holmes became President. Mr. Draddy is now Chairman Emeritus, having retired as Chairman several years ago.
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Q: Why don't we start, as you suggest, by talking about the beginning of David Crystal.

A: Back in the days when David Crystal founded this company originally, most of the manufacturers that were in New York City were on the lower East Side. They were just skirt manufacturers.

Q: Was this about 1905?

A: Yeah. There were also blouse manufacturers. There were just two categories. You made skirts and you made blouses and that was it. Now, that went on for quite some time, until about 1920. At that time, Dave Crystal, and several others, thought of sewing the tops to the skirts, and making what today is a dress. In the old days, most all the women had their own private dressmakers, and most of the clothes were made by private dressmakers, with the exception of skirts and blouses. And they got the idea of sewing them together, and that really was the beginning of the dress business as we know it today. Actually, we talk about the separates business today. That is a reverse of what it was originally. Because it was separate skirts and separate blouses, and that's what the separates business is today. Separate skirts and... except we've added pants and shorts and all that stuff. So Dave started a dress business--maybe it was 1919, or somewhere in that area--and he was pretty successful. He was a fabric minded person, and realized the value of good fabrics. I think this was part of his success, his knowledge of fabrics and his belief in fabrics, and back about that same time was a tremendous amount of gambling in woolen piece goods. People like Juilliard, and those fellows, were selling contracts and those contracts would be bought by manufacturers who never processed,
just...they'd sell the contract and make a big profit. This went on, and then all of a sudden there was a tremendous...

Q: Was this because of the war?
A: No, this was just gambling. Gambling in contracts, like you gamble today in sugar futures and all the other futures. They were gambling in wool contracts. And at that point, Dave Crystal took a big position with A.D. Juilliard, and there was a fellow named Schwartz there, who was a friend of his, and he kept telling Dave to buy more wool, wool's going up and going up and going up, and Dave got loaded up and the bottom fell out. And he went broke. And to his credit, most of them went into bankruptcy. But he didn't, and he paid off. And it took him a long time to pay off. But he did pay off. And, of course, he established a reputation then for credibility and credit and honesty, and so forth. So anyway...you come up through the twenties...There was a cartoon called Winnie Winkle. It's still in the papers. And Dave Crystal got the idea of making the Winnie Winkle dress, which was a skirt with two straps and a blouse. And it became known as the Winnie Winkle dress, and Dave made a lot of money on that dress. It lasted for quite a few years, maybe three or four years, and he was able to get in a good position financially. So he...Then, of course, we ran into the terrible Wall Street crash and the Depression of 1930, '31, '32, and business in those days was very, very tough. It was almost impossible to make money, because nobody wanted to buy anything. Nobody had any money to buy anything. So, I was with Union Carbide at that time, and I came over to David Crystal in 1934. So, now, Dave Crystal and I worked together for about....

Q: Could you tell me something about the circumstances...Well, you can
do that afterwards.

A: I'll come back to that. I just want to cover... We worked together from 1934 to 1941. Then, because of World War II, Dave Crystal decided to retire and went to live in Florida, and worked out a deal with us where we paid him a certain amount, and we actually ran the business. Now, in those years, they were really tough years. Until 1937, we came up with a fabric called cruisaline which was a printed fabric which we bought from Mallinson, and this was a tremendous success. And we really had what, for those days, was a profitable business. It brought us up a couple of notches above the average manufacturer. Because we were very successful, and we had...

Q: About how much...?

A: Volume in those days? Well, by today's standards it was peanuts. But I would say we were doing about $2 million. So, then, that lasted right through the war. And the Navy had to take all the silk noiles for the gunpowder... gun bags, outer bags, and of course that left us without the fabric. However, in the meantime, I had made a good deal with a company called Lorraine Manufacturing Company, which made very fine worsted gabardine. And up to that point, the only gabardine that people really thought much of was Forstmann's charmie gabardine, and there was a fellow named Zoltan Rosenberg who had that sewn up. So I made this deal with a mill because I had talked to a couple of people and they said they thought there was a great opportunity in gabardine. That's why you should listen to people. So at that time we were not making any. So... I made this deal, and I bought a hundred pieces of gabardine, which was unheard of, and my designer almost fainted when I said I had bought.
Q: A piece 60 to 70 yards...Is that...
A: What?
Q: A piece about 60 yards...
A: Sixty yards...60-65 yards...And that was a lot of merchandise for those days. Everything is relative. For those days, it was a tremendous amount of merchandise. Today it's nothing. So, during the war gabardine became the big fabric. And we had all that we could get, and we were the only ones who could get it, and they used to stand in line to buy the dresses. And we started off with the dresses at $16.75 and then went on up until we got to $23.75, which was $7 more than where we started. There were no markdowns. There were no returns. There was no nothing. So we started making a lot of money. So that lasted pretty much through the war. At the end of the war, it stopped. Gabardine stopped selling, just like you had cut off a cat's tail. Nobody wanted it, at any price. So then we were back in the thing of trying to find new fabrics and so forth. So, we kept going. We had one idea after another. And in the fashion business, in the manufacturing business, it's a question of finding new ideas and new fabrics, constantly. If you don't find them you wind up in the ash can. But if you find them, you can keep the business going. Well, we managed to keep them going, and cruisaline came back after the war. And then we had another fabric called livisette, then we had pure linen and then...We had all kinds of fabrics. With the result that we kept the company going, and profitably. As a matter of fact, we never lost any money. We've always made a profit, which is very unusual too, because it was a peaks and valleys business if there ever was one. Guys in the dress business for the winter would die in the summer, and the
guys who had a good summer business would die in the winter. So, we kept going.

And then, of course, came the war—the Korean war—and that gave everything a big push again, because of the scarcity of fabrics right away. So we were busy, during those years. Now, in 1953...Well, let me go back a little further. Nineteen forty-seven, I started the Izod Company, which is our menswear division; and I was down in Nassau playing golf in a tournament down there, and I noticed a lot of the guys in the tournaments were wearin good looking shirts. So I asked them where they got them, and they said, "Well, there's a guy named Mitchell down on the waterfront, and he makes the shirts for $2. But you've gotta give him the material.'

Well, of course, the Bahamas were British possessions at that time, and they could import all these beautiful gingham's and checks and everything, at very low prices, because there was no duty. So I had some shirts made, and they were very good looking. And I came back, after the tournament and everything, and I decided this might be the solution for the peaks and valleys. So I started the menswear Izod business as we know it today. What I did: we were stuck with a lot of women's fabrics, which you always have inventory of. You know, silks and voiles and all kinds of fabrics. So I made up a lot of shirts, and the only encouragement I got from anybody was Adam Gimbel, who was then the President of Saks, and the guy who was the head of Tripler & Company. He was very enthusiastic about what I was doing, and he said we needed something like that. He said the men's business was so dead, there's nothing alive in it. So I made these shirts, and they were an immediate success. We did a million dollars the first year, which was, in those days, unheard of. And with no investors. I didn't have a designer, I didn't have anything. I just made up fabrics that I owned...And, as a matter of fact, I had marked down,
and got a good profit out of them. So that was the beginning of our Izod menswear line.

Q: Wasn't there an Izod women's thing contemplated back before that...

A: Well, I'll go back and tell you this. The original idea of Izod was to make it into a women's line, which we did, before the war, in 1937. But, we had to discontinue it because of all the restrictions, government restrictions on how much fabric you could use, etc., etc. So we discontinued it. So when we came back after the war, that's when I decided to make Izod into a men's line, which originally it had been in Europe, you see. So it was an immediate success. And from that point on, as I say, we had no designers, no salesmen--anything. We did a million dollars, mostly doing it myself with some of the New York retailers.

Q: Still operating out of 498 (Seventh Avenue)? Is that the building?

A: Four-ninety-eight, yeah.

Q: A men's line in 498.

A: Well...which was very unusual, because we are a men's house doing ...a woman's house doing menswear in a women's house business. There were no other men's businesses around. As a matter of fact, there were no other sportswear, shirt manufacturers around. they all made...Like Cluett Peabody and all those people, made regular dress shirts. So we had a picnic for a while, until the other guys got wise to what we were doing. In the meantime...Then around 1951, I made a deal on the Lacoste shirt, which was made in France and brought over here, and I made a deal for an exclusive on it, and I bought 2,000 shirts and got it con-
fined to the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. After I got the shirts—which had to retail for $8, and which in those days were real high priced shirts—I couldn't sell it. Nobody wanted to buy it. I said... You know... It's beautiful. It's imported cotton, this and that... had a nice knitted collar, knitted sleeve, long tail. But the retailer... the American retailer said "Nah, that's too much money. Who in the hell ever saw a shirt like that before, anyway. With a long tail on it." So, anyway, I got nowhere. So at the end of two years I hadn't sold a shirt. So now I was faced with the fact of either giving them away or selling them for a quarter, or something like that. So then I decided on another thought that came to me. In those days I used to play a lot of golf. And I knew all the golfers and a lot of celebrities. So I started to give them away to Bing Crosby and Bob Hope and John Wayne, and all these important kinds of people. And these guys are all nice guys, and they'll take a hot stove, you know.... They'll take anything you give'em. So they all started to wear the shirt. And as a result of their wearing the shirt, then people started to see a picture of Bing Crosby with this shirt on, and a picture of Bob Hope, and they'd say, "What the hell is that little alligator?" So, the guys would say, "Well, I don't know." And all kinds of stories popped up. That you had to belong to a certain club in Florida. That you had to be a par golfer. You had to have a hole in one, or maybe... a million stories. And none of them were true. The only thing you had to have was $8 to buy the shirt.

Q: That added a lot of status.
A: Huh?
Q: It added a lot of status.
A: Oh, sure. Well, you see, that's what happens. So now, the guy goes into his local haberdasher and says "You got the shirt with the alligator on it?" And the guy says, "No, I don't have it, but I know where to get it." Because I'd been trying to sell it to them for two years. So they started calling us up and buying the shirt. So, that was like 1953 or 1954, before it started to move. And then it took off like a rocket. And of course since that time it's been unbelievable. Fantastic. Now, of course, from that point, we went with...I started a children's business. And we did fairly well, but not until we put the alligator on it. Then we started to fly with it.

Q: Is that the Crystal Sunflowers?

A: Crystal Sunflowers. Yeah. That was a little business that I started, again with no capital, with no help, no sales people or anything. But it grew by itself, pretty nicely. And then when we decided to put alligators on the little clothes, then, of course, it just took off, like you couldn't believe it. Today we probably do about $150 million in children's wear.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. From a standing start--we didn't have investors--We had an office half this size that I gave to a guy and told him "That's your office, and that's the showroom, and that's everything. See what you can do...." So all of our companies....

Q: Do you remember what year that was?

A: Yeah. It was about fourteen years ago.

Q: And now you're doing $150 million.

A: Yeah. It's just unbelievable. Have you seen the children's
things?

Q: No.

A: Oh...Go into Saks. Go and take a look at them. They are so adorable. We make them for babies, five, six months old, up to like 12 years old. And they they stand in line to buy them....

Q: Now, do they use the alligators just on the sports shirts... on the polo shirts....everything?

A: On everything. Little rompers, they put an alligator on. Little shorts, they put the alligator on it. Everything. Sweaters, the whole bit. And they have a big line. And gorgeous stuff. And the women, the mothers, the kids will buy them...You know, the kids are the ones who tell the mother, "I want the alligators..." So, anyway, that became a tremendous business...Now, the Haymaker business, I also started that, and that was in 1947. I started that... We decided to go...See, I was concerned always about these peaks and valleys, so I kept thinking what we could do to smooth it out so we could have a steady business. Well, there are certain things that would have a longer life than, for example, dresses, and one of those things was blouses. So we made two blouses, to start the Haymaker Company. That's all we had, two blouses. And one had long sleeves and one had short sleeves. And they were the same stripe; all hand made button holes, though. Now, in those days you couldn't buy blouses with hand made button holes, except for quite a bit of money. But we made these so they could retail for $6.75, with hand made button holes, and that, of course, was a tremendous magnet for the buyers to come in and buy them. So that started the Haymaker line. Now that...We started that, and then we added...a couple of years later we added some
skirts and some shorts and so on and so forth. And again, with no capital invested. Just starting from scratch. My brother Greg came with us and he ran that department, but it was a very small business. But it kept growing and growing and growing. Now today, it's the same thing, we'll probably do about $160 million in there. And this again, no capital invested. All these companies were started with no capital investment. Just an idea, and then the progression of that idea on out. So we had now the Haymaker Company, the Izod Company and the David Crystal Company. So we added a Junior business which was good for about three or four years. We added a....In 1953 we went into the suit business, and we were very successful. We made a Handmacher type suit and we used a fabric that was unusual, and we had it confined to us. It didn't soil or spot or you could put ink on it and it would roll right off.

Q: What was the name of that company?


Q: North...

A: N-o-r-t-h...Cool. That was a term to create the idea of a nice cool summer fabric. But we did very well with that for about 15 years, until the suit business sort of just went out of business. People didn't buy suits. It was all separates and skirts and blouses and jackets. Ours was a regular fitted suit. So we went on down, and we kept coming up with...We bought out a company called Stony Brook, which was a lower priced, lot of volume, but gave us a big impetus in our volume of business. Didn't add to much to profit but made the sales higher...

Q: Is this a dress collection?
A: Yeah, it is a dress collection. Cheaper dress collection. Made mostly out of riyella type of fabric. So then we got going around...We kept making money all through the years, and then around 1963 Burnham & Company, which is now Drexel, Burnham & Company, came to us and said "You fellows ought to go public, and we'll take you public. We have the means and the know how and everything else." So we fooled around for a little while with them, and then we finally decided to go over the counter--what they call "over the counter." So in 19...I guess it was around 1964 or '65 we went public and we sold 40% of our business to the public and we kept 60%. So we were doing very well and growing all year, steadily, in sales and profits, to the point where our stock was now, had doubled in price from what it was when we bought it out. It was $15 and it was now selling at around $30, so all or our stockholders were doing very well. Then General Mills, in 1967, approached us to take over our company and we started to negotiate with them. It was about a 10 month negotiation, at which time our profits were good. And in those days, you may not remember, the country was crazy with going public. Everybody was going public. No matter what you had you went public with it, and the result was that an awful lot of people went public and then two or three years later went bust. I mean, you just didn't have the where-withal...the real gutsy part of the business. Well, we were strong and we were smart, and we knew what the...how to do it, and we watched our inventories and our expenses and everything else. So that when we went public, we got 33 times earnings. The average today, if we were going ot buy a company today, it would be six or seven times earnings. So we got a tremendous price. We got $34 million. In those days...now that was a lot of money. I'll never forget, I met Charlie
Revsion one day, and he said tome, "How the hell did you get that much money for your business?" He had bought a guy before us for $10 million, and everybody thought he had overpaid. And he subsequently sold it back to them. You know who I mean, the sportswear manufacturer...

Q: Evan Picone?

A: Evan Picone. He paid them $10 million, and everybody had never heard of such money. And I come up with $33 million. He couldn't believe it. So I said, "Charlie, I was just lucky, that's all. Simply luck." So, anyway, we finally made the deal and General Mills took us over on an exchange of stock for our stock, and we came away with about $34 million, which was a hell of a good price. Now today, if we hadn't sold it, and everything was the same, we'd get a tremendous amount of money, more than what we got then. Because we're making a big profit today. But anyway, we then.... Now, with General Mills, nothing really changed. We still ran the business and did all the things we wanted to do the way we wanted to do them. The only exception is that they do the financial end of the business. In other words, they take our profit and put it in a pot, with all their other companies, and then they figure out how they're going to move the money around. But, actually, we've given them a great.... They made a great buy in David Crystal. They made all their money back inside of four years, and ever since then they've been cleaning up. They made more money last year than they paid us for the whole company. In one year.

Q: At some point.... Not now.... But, I mean, I'd love to hear from you what your feelings are about some of the acquisitions made by conglomerates that haven't been like your great, wonderful, successful one. But some of the
ones like Genesco with Majestic, and so on.

A: Yeah. Well...

Q: I'm not asking you to get into it now. But I would love to hear what your feelings are... The company today has how many divisions, altogether?

A: Well, we have Haymaker, Crystal Sunflower, Izod, Izod for Her; And then in Izod, we have a breakdown. We have outerwear—which is a separate division within the division. And we have an accessory line which is inside Haymaker. So we have like divisions within the divisions. I'd say altogether, including everything, there are probably seven or eight divisions.

Q: And you are still at 498....
A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Have you taken any more space over the years?
A: Oh, tremendous. We have five floors in 498, on both sides of the building, which is the equivalent of ten floors. And then we have over in 501, we have three floors over there.

Q: A showroom, or...
A: Well, you know... room that we need for...

Q: Right, right.
A: ....record keeping and stuff like that.

Q: Well... How... With the kind of space that you have, in a general way, do you run your divisions pretty much along the same lines... that is to say, do you have your production done approximately the same way in each division, with contractors or... that you own... or...
A: Well, here's the....each division head runs his division pretty much to suit himself, as far as fabrics and style and price, delivery, and where he's gonna get it made and how he's gonna get it made. That we leave to the individual department head and his people. Each one has their own group of people. That is pretty much the way it's always been. We don't interfere too much, if they're doing a good job. If they're not doing a good job, we sure as hell interfere with them. But those fellows...the boy that's head of Haymaker is doing a good job; the girl that's head of Izod for Her is doin a good job; Izod is unbelievable, you know. And there's a whole group there. There's a whole group of guys that run that. So they all head up into the David Crystal Company, which is the parent company, which, of course, is owned entirely by General Mills. But General Mills does not interfere in that part of our business. The only place you get what you might call interference is the figures, the numbers. Because they're constantly working on....You've got to give them five year projections, and things like that. What we think we'll be doing five years from now.

Q: That's pretty hard in the fashion business.

A: It's impossible. Impossible. They don't know that. They don't understand it. When they first came to me with that, I said "I can't tell you what I'm going to do in six months, let alone five years." But they want the projections anyway, and we do them, and they have to change them if they have to change them. But so far we've always run ahead of the projections.

Q: Five years ago were you able to project the volume that you were going to run at this year?
A: No way. No way. There was no way. They....We went beyond their fondest dreams. I remember, back in the early days, when I started the Izod Company and the Haymaker Company, I got the guys at Izod and I said to them, "Listen. You know, we've got a good product and we've got a good name, and I only hope the day will come when we will do $5 million. Five million dollars." They'll do about $200 million this year.

Q: Just in Izod.

A: Yeah. So it was just phenomenal growth, you know. Well, it's unrealistic, you know. When you think of where we started, and...

Q: When you went public, you were doing something around $30 million, is that...

A: About $27.....

Q: About $27 million.

A: And that was considered a very good size in those days. I mean, you know, the whole industry is made up mostly of firms that did under $2 million. There were only a few that did more than that. When I came into the business, in 1934, International Dress was the biggest, and they did about $5 million, and that was, like, you know, phenomenal. That was the biggest. Now, of course, they're all gone. They're out of business. Most of those guys are all out of business. We're the only one that's left, really. All the fellows that I was competing with all those years are all gone. The mortality rate in the dress business is just unreal. Unreal. It's probably going to be better now because we've all gotten more strength and we've got more money, and can withstand trouble better. But even take Jonathan Logan. They've got a problem. You know. Right now. And they're
going to have to sell the merchandise to K-Mart....

Q: But they don't look at that as a problem. They look at that as a new technique.

A: Well, when you start selling to K-Mart or Sears, Roebuck or Montgomery Ward, forget all your regular customers. Why the hell should they bother with you?

Q: Except this is a licensing arrangement for a name...they don't use.

A: It's the kiss of death. You wait and see.

Q: Well, it will be interesting to see. A lot has happened in the whole industry, right this very year.

A: Sure.

Q: This is a fascinating year...

A: But you see, when you get pushed to the wall, then you start to do things that you would not normally do. During a war...during the First World War...I mean the Second World War, when all the guys got together and everybody was crying the blues and the retailers...I remember having a meeting with the retailers and they said, "Well, we're not going to sell anything but black dresses. Everybody's going to have a husband or a brother or somebody that's going to be killed. So who's going to buy colorful dresses. Nobody." So everybody was down in the dumps. I went to Sears, Roebuck...as, again, to protect my flank...And said, "Look, we're a good maker. We make quality clothes. But I'm not so sure how much quality clothes business is going to be sold during the war. I'll make dresses for you. And you'll have the advantage of a better maker." We made a deal. It subsequently
happened that the things that they thought were going to happen during the war never happened, and within a couple of years I wished I'd never made the deal with Sears, Roebuck. But in the meantime it was a safety valve for me.

Q: Did they have your label, because it's....

A: No, I just made the clothes. I wouldn't let them use the label. But I kept the factory. We owned our own factories. I had to keep those factories busy. Because that was really what I tried to accomplish, and I did. But then, our regular customers started needing merchandise, now I need that production back again. And, of course, I had a deal with them and I had to live up to it. So...But it didn't hurt us. It helped us in the long run, because we would have had...in a period when a lot of guys were having trouble, we didn't have any trouble.

Q: You led into something which is really very interesting. Namely, merchandise and where and how it's manufactured. And I know it varies enormously. For example, in the beginning, you brought the Izod shirt from Europe, is that right?

A: The Lacoste shirt. Right.

Q: I meant the Lacoste shirt. And then you began...When did you begin to produce it here?

A: Well, you see, the problem over in France...and they've still got the problem...was that every year an increase in price. Every year that yarn had to go up in price. Every year the workers had to get more money. So finally we were gettin out of line. We couldn't sell the shirt. And we went from $8 to $9 to $10 to $11 to $12, and it looked like it was never gonna end. So at that point we decided to make them here, and actually, we make them better here today
than they make them over there.

Q: What year did you start making them here?
A: Ah...Well, we experimented with it over a long period of time. I think 10 years ago.

Q: Ten years ago.
A: Yes. Because they became impossible to do. So, we said, "Look, either we make them here or we don't make them."

Q: So your arrangement changed. You were no longer just a distributor. You became a lices...
A: No...As it is now, we do everything, and they just get a royalty.

Q: So it's just a straight out licensing...percentage, or whatever it is....Now, what is done here...How much is done in the U.S. and how much is done offshore?
A: Well, the menswear is mostly here. The children's is offshore. The women's is half and half. And it will continue to get further away, I think, as time goes on. Because they make them better, and the quality is better, the sewing is better, the fabrics are just as good. And the price is half.

Q: You're in a very interesting situation, because reorders have changed in their character, but not in your firm. A lot of people I have talked to have said to me, "Stores don't place reorders any more." But, of course, that's not true with a good part of your business. You get a lot of reorders, obviously.
A: Yeah. But we also get a lot of big orders, originally.
Q: I see.
A: Which gives us the opportunity to plan better. See, we're already
into next fall and this is only April, so we're already going back into the spring of '83. So we can... From our early orders, you see, we can anticipate pretty much what's gonna happen. You're not always right. You get stuck every once in a while with something that you thought was going to be good, and the retailer thought it was going to be good, but it's not good. And that's minimal. And you live with that. And you absorb it, you know, because you're making a profit on all the other stuff.

Q: What about Haymaker, which is not Lacoste and doesn't have the same advance buying, I would assume, that...

A: They do pretty good. All our companies, really, get a lot of advance buying. We do, and I think the reason for it is that they know if they don't do it they won't get it. And they sure want to have it. Herb Rubenson, who runs our children's division, God, he works a year ahead. And the stores come in and give him commitments for stuff way, way in advance, so he is able to operate his business on a very profitable level because he knows what he's doing and he's got the backing of the stores even before he starts to do it.

Q: Well that's, of course, amazing, because that's you said, an off-shore delivery, which means that the delivery is very long and you are getting store backing to make it possible.

A: Yes, but you see, they know that unless they cooperate they're not going to get the stuff. And they want it. Because it sells. If it didn't sell they wouldn't want it. There's no mysteries about our business. There's no... loyalty, or friendship as far as I'm concerned. I know the retailers...

Q: Yes, talk about that...
A: ...for a long time...

Q: Talk about that if you will...

A: You know, they're your friend as long as you've got good merchandise. When you don't have good merchandise, they might still be your friend, but they're not going to buy from you. Friendship doesn't give you business. It gives you an entree...

Q: Does it not also give you the possibility that your friends will make your collection right if it isn't right?

A: That used to happen when you had small businesses, and the buyer would come in and say, "Well, why don't you change the neckline on that dress? It's a lousy neckline." So you'd take it in... the back, change the neckline and show it the next day. But that...that's...you don't have the time, you're already in production. You got a bad neckline, you're stuck with it, see. But chances are you won't have a bad neckline, because the buyers wouldn't buy it. You eliminate it from the line. So, friendship is a wonderful thing. It enables you to open doors that you might not be able to open, or that you might be having trouble...So that you call up the store owner, or the boss....They don't like it, the buyers don't like it...But lots of times you have to do it, because you'll run into a buyer who isn't being cooperative as she should be, or he should be, and/or they've got a beef about something, you know....So you get the thing squared away, you see. You say to them, "Look, if that buyer's going to stay there, we're not going to sell you anymore. Now, if you want the product line, get the guy who understands what the hell we're trying to do." You see, when you've got something good, you can talk tough. When you don't have something good, you can't talk tough. So
that's why you've gotta be good. Now, we've been lucky, because the alligator has been a tremendous force in the whole industry as far as retailers go, at every level--children's, women's, boys'--our boys' business is fantastic too. You know, from kids up to size 12. So when you have something they want, boy, they'll play ball with you. I remember the years when we didn't have it. You know. Before we had the alligator. And it was tough.

Q: When you started that "Good Guys Club," is that the name of it...
A: Yeah. Twenty-five years ago.
Q: Right. Was your feeling about the retailer the same as it is now?
A: They all know me...And I say it with affection. They love me. Because we...And I don't mince any words with them. I tell them they're a bunch of jerks when they are, and I kid them, and I take them out on the golf course and take their money from them. Which they all seem to enjoy very much. So...
No...I love the guys. All the guys in the business. And I like the retailers, but I don't trust them, if you know what I mean. They're...And I don't blame them...They're into business, they're into making money. Now, if I've got a lousy line and I'm their friend, and I say, "Hey, come on, buy my line," The guy might say, "Okay," but it's reluctant. He doesn't want to do it because he knows it's no good. But if it's good, then he loves to buy from me. So you've really got to be good. That's what it comes down to. And you can't get away with being not good very long. If you're not good, you'd better hurry up and get good. Because they can't buy from you. Even if they love you.

Q: What...How do you feel about the new divisions that you have put together over the years? They appear to be--if I understand correctly--mostly things you've developed from scratch. Have you acquired any businesses...
A: Nope. Not David Crystal. We started every one from scratch.
Q: Every one.
A: Yes. And I believe in that. I don't believe in acquiring businesses. At a big price. And then have them flop. Which is what happened to General Mills...a couple of times. So I believe in starting small and growing and using your power, what you have, in the place, and making it pay off for you. Every company that I ever started--and that's all of them--were started with no investment. No capital investment at all. Just took space that we had--anyway--put somebody in an empty space. Got them some merchandise that was different and unusual--like the children's wear. When we first started out, I started it...before we got into the alligator, we used to embroider little ducks and chickens and stuff for the little kids, and they were cute as hell. And that was the beginning of it. As a matter of fact, a girl came to see me with some tennis dresses, and she wanted me to buy the tennis dresses. Now...they were terrible. Loving hands at home...They were really no good. But I looked in the suitcase that she had, and I said "What are those little things?" And she said, "Oh, they're some children's things I made. I'm gonna take them to Lord & Taylor this afternoon." And I said "Well, call up Lord & Taylor and tell them you'll see them tomorrow, because I want to talk to you about them." Because I liked what I saw. So, she was from Phoenix, Arizona, and she had a little business down there, and she made children's clothes. So that's how we got started in Crystal Sunflowers. These girls from Phoenix. But they weren't very professional; they weren't very good. So after a while...We could do it better ourselves, you see...I settled with them. Made a good deal with them. They got some money. Then I had the freedom
of going out and doing whatever we wanted to do. So we started to make all kinds of stuff. And then we put the alligator on it, and it just took off like the shuttle...straight up.

Q: So that's the closest thing to an acquisition I gather...
A: Pardon me?

Q: That's the closest to an acquisition...
A: Oh, that wasn't even an acquisition...No...You couldn't call any part of it an acquisition. No, we've made no acquisitions..Yes. Made one. Ernie Saverak. Now, Ernie Saverak you probably never heard of. But he's the selling arm for the golf pro shops. And I bought his company back in, oh, '64- '65, somewhere back in there. And that's been very successful.

Q: He acts as a distributor?
A: He distributes.

Q: And that for the pro shops.
A: Just pro shops.

Q: Yes. Right. And that works...
A: ....75 salesmen just to call on the pro shops. And we have the best pro shop business in the business. We get the best coverage, we sell the best merchandise. We also acquired Foot Joy shoes, but we had them for a while, but General Mills separated them from us because they wanted to have a separate sales force. They're not under our jurisdiction anymore, but I made the original ..buy..on the Foot Joy Shoes. So...It's been a wonderful business, and everybody's made a lot of money, including General Mills. Nobody can't be happy.

Q: The...Your philosphy, generally, about the kind of merchandise,
generally, that you want to have and the kind of customer that you want to have ...
There seem to be some common threads running through. Could you talk about that a little bit?

A: Sure. Well, being the kind of person I am and always have been, I want the best. I didn't want to sell to second rate stores. Ever. For many years I wouldn't sell Macy's. Or Bloomingdale's...Yeah. It's a fact I just wanted to sell to Bergdorf's and Saks and Bonwit and Peck & Peck and Best & Company, Lord & Taylor and Altman's. That was the type. I. Magnin on the West Coast, Neiman Marcus down south, in the Southwest. That kind of store. That was my customer. And anything below...

End of Tape 1, Side 1
A: ...Krensky you know, became President of Federated Department Stores...is a very good friend of mine. But he used to come down, when he was the merchandise man at Bloomingdale's, and try to get me to sell him. And I would say "No, Harold, I don't want to sell you. If I sell you, I'm going to lose my other good accounts. Because you're over there on Third Avenue, and you're not out type of customer." So we'd argue and argue back and forth, and we became very good friends, as a matter of fact. And then he said, "Look, you don't realize, I sell more good merchandise than most of the stores on Fifth Avenue." In those days polo coats were very big. He said, "I sell more polo coats than Best & Company and Lord & Taylor put together." So, I said, "Well..." So anyway, we were making a little shirt Haymaker at that time. So he said, "I want that shirt." So I said, "Well, come on down and we'll talk about it. It is kind of a cute story. There's a buyer, whom I still see and I know her. I still see buyers around that I knew, you know...She came in and she looked at the line and Harold came with her, and I sat there with them. And he says to the girl, "How many shirts are you gonna buy?" And she said, "Well, I sort of thought maybe I'd buy a thousand." So he got up out of the chair, put on his hat, and said, "If you don't buy 10,000, don't come back to work tomorrow." That's the kind of a guy he was, you see. So, from that point on, he proved to me, "I don't fool around." And he meant it. And she had to buy the 10,000 shirts. That was a lot of shirts in those days. So that...

Q: When you say "those days," about what year was that?
A: Oh...Middle fifties...

Q: He was the President of Bloomingdale's?
A: He was the merchandise manager.

Q: Oh. Okay.

A: He wasn't President. He was the merchandise man, and that was his job. To get good merchandise. And he knew good merchandise. He was a good merchant...He was the best around for a long time. So we became very good friends. As a matter of fact, I see him all the time. We play golf together. And he's the kind of a friend who is a helpful friend. He would go into a store...I know this for a fact...because it would come back to me...He'd go into a store where they weren't doing very well with Izod, and he'd say "Where's your Izod?" and the guy would say, "Well, we don't sell very much of it." And he'd say, "Well, you know why don't you? Because you don't have it. You don't have enough of it. And you don't have the right stuff. The next time I come, be sure you got it." And I never said a word to him. But he wanted it in the stores. So that's the kind of fellow he was.

Q: I think what I meant about the commonality of interests is not just the Saks vs. a Macy's, but also yours is a customer who lives a relatively casual kind of life. I mean..

A: Well, you see, I'm a golfer. And so my mind runs in that direction. I was football player. I always liked the nice things in life. Even when I was in football...Playing football in college. And a lot of things I didn't want to be bothered with or look at or anything because I had a higher ideal of what was right and wrong. And this carried over into my life. I mean, my daily life. All my friends in Westchester were nice people who dressed nicely and had good homes and everything like that. So I always wanted the best, the quality in my life, you
see. So when I started to go into all these different businesses, it was on the basis of what we could do better than what was being done.

Q: You were never really interested in high fashion. You didn't really attempt...

A: No. Because I didn't think that high fashion had any profit making potential. You see, after all, I was in business to make money, and I wanted something I could sell a thousand of, not a hundred or fifty. I'll never forget, Stanley Marcus, I saw him the other night, and... Have you met his new wife?

Q: No.

A: Very pretty girl. And I hadn't met her until the other night... And we go way back... Stanley and I go back to the middle thirties. And... I think it was about 1939... They were going to have a big World's Fair down there in, I think, Dallas... This was a fair; a Texas fair. So he came to me and he said, "I want you to make me a dress, exclusive, for the whole State of..." Well in those days, that's all they ever wanted, was exclusives. "For the whole State of Texas. I don't want anybody else in Texas to have it. And if you make me a nice dress, I'll buy 3,000." Now, back in the thirties, 3,000 dresses was a hell of an order. But the dress was only going to be $10.75, you know... Which in those days was a pretty good price. Listen, I remember when Rentner, who was the biggest guy in the business, made $12.75 dresses. Sondheim, all those guys, they all made $12.75 dresses. People think that all those high priced dresses were always here. They weren't. Mollie Parnis, her top dress price was $16.75. Anyway... So I made a dress, and I had a print made of the Lone Star of Texas... You know, just a big star, and I put that on the belt and the dress sold like hotcakes. It was a hell
of a dress. It was pure silk, for $10.75. So he wrote me a nice letter and said, "Nobody makes clothes as well as you, that fit as well." And that was true. Our dresses always did fit. And when we made our menswear...See, getting it from the dress business affected our menswear. In those days, the guys who were making shirts used to put the pockets on on the bias, so they didn't have to match. Which was a cheap way of doing it. We had the pockets match, with the stripe or check or design...We were used to doing it in dresses. It was no deal for us to do it in menswear. We got a reputation for making the finest men's shirts. Because everything matched. The shoulders matched. The pockets matched. The collar matched. Nobody else did that. And it wasn't hard for us to do that. We did it in the dress business all the time. So these are the things that make you better, and people appreciate what you're doing, and you get a feeling of taste and good quality. Good quality, good fabric, at the right price. That was our credo, really. And it worked very well.

End of Tape 1, Side 2
Q: Vin, could we talk about what your own feelings are concerning the way the industry works today and the way it used to be, a lot of intimacy and acquaintanceship between people you used to know...

A: Yeah. Well, as a matter of fact, the industry, when I went into it in the middle thirties, was very competitive, very small units. Most of the manufacturers did about maybe a million dollars a year. A few might have done more than that. But in general, it was made up of many small manufacturers. The feeling amongst the manufacturers was one of friendliness and good will, even though they were competitors. As a matter of fact, on several occasions, we loaned money to several of our competitors...

Q: Really.

A: ...to help them past the bad times. So that...it was a wonderful spirit. And we had a group of about 24 sportswear manufacturers, which you know most of them--Dave Goodstein, Davidow, all those fellows--and we used to meet once a month, as a group. And we were very sharp competitors, because we basically sold the same people. But there was a very good feeling of helping each other and working as a group and as a team to make sportswear important in the American market, and so forth. All of those fellows were nice guys, but they're all gone...

Q: I was going to ask you. Is anybody left?

A: No. Nobody's left. They're all gone. And I knew...You might remember some of them. Dave Goodstein, remember David Goodstein?

Q: No, but I knew Davidow...

A: Davidow...and Mutual Rosenbloom, and Woody Bloom...all those fel-
lows. Billy Bloom was probably one of the best stylists that ever lived in
the sportswear business. And he was very bright and wonderful guy, but you
know. As they say, they got older and disappeared...

Q: Why do you think they went out of business?

A: Well, because business... In most cases, they had nobody in
back of them. There was no continuity of strength. So that they were unable
to continue the business. And most of them who tried to bring in their sons-in-
laws or sons, the kid didn't have the capability of the old man, you see? Just
like, you take, Lou Kalish. You remember Lou Kalish? Well, he had one of the
best dress businesses at that time. Well, his two sons just blew the whole
thing. They had one of the good businesses on Seventh Avenue. And now they're
both working as salesmen for other people. It's pathetic, really. But it's
very rarely that the son takes over and does a good job. Most of them fall by
the wayside. One of the reasons, I think, is they spoil... Because their fathers
did a good job, and they got spoiled where the father was never spoiled. He
went to work the hard way. But that seems to have all changed now. You go down
...walk down Seventh Avenue... You don't see anybody. You don't know anybody.
They never seem to be together... except F.I.T. has a big party, then everybody
goes to the big party. But even at the big party, you don't know half the people.
Because there's so many different elements now, involved. We used to have.......
When Dorothy Shaver started the "Party of the Year," you, I'm sure went to it, it
was a marvelous party. Everybody knew everybody else. Now you go to one of those
parties, and there are so many different companies involved. So many different
people involved, that have very little to do with the dress industry. So the
thing has changed, and I don't think, in a sense, for the better. Profit wise, size wise, yes. They're much bigger and they're much stronger, and probably will last longer. But, that's the big companies. The small companies, you know, go through a period of success and then all of a sudden something happens and the partners split up, and so forth and so on.

Q: And out they go, unless they're acquired, or get big enough to be acquired, that is.

A: Well, yeah. The acquiring thing I think is calming down a lot in our industry, because of the lack of success in the industry. Genesco is a perfect example of buying up a lot of companies, and then the whole thing just falls flat on its back.

Q: Well, why do you think it happens with Genesco, and, indeed, with practically every big conglomerate that has bought....

A: I think it is very simple. In the first place, they generally overpay for the company. Now, here's a fellow who's been working hard and trying to get money together, and all of a sudden, he had no problems. Money problems. And besides that, they maybe gave him a couple of million dollars, you know, for himself. And he stops working. He stops worrying. He stops trying. He figures the momentum will carry it along. You see. And the momentum of the "big papa" in back of him will be sufficient. And that isn't what happens. What happens to most of them--and in Genesco's case, of course, it was bad management all the way through. From the top right down.

Q: Of Genesco, is that what you mean, or of the companies?

A: The people in the company and the company itself. See, Maxy
Jarman was the first really conglomerate fellow in our industry. He bought all kinds of stores—retailers and wholesalers—which was a mistake in itself, because I don't think you can be in both businesses. If you want to be a retailer, be a retailer. If you want to be a wholesaler, be a wholesaler. But if you try to be both, you start running into competition with other people. And they won't buy from you now, because they know you own stores, that are going to get preference, and things of that nature. Every time they've ever tried it it failed. But Genesco, he was doing everything. And Jarman I just, I think he got drunk with success, and the fact that he could buy companies quick, fairly reasonable. With just stock. No cash, you see. But in the meantime, he's pushing out a lot of stuff. The management of all these companies wasn't good. And then they started to change management, and that is the key to the quick death. When they bring in people who do not understand the industry, from some other industry, and put them into a job of running a company. And it's killed all of them, except those fellows like Elmer Ward of the Palm Beach Company...

Q: Uh huh. Right. Yes.
A: See, they were always in the manufacturing business. And when they acquired somebody, they acquired manufacturers, and they knew that business.

Q: But they were not like a Genesco, in a lot of other kinds of merchandise; Genesco was not like Palm Beach in that sense...
A: Oh, no. That's what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that Palm Beach is successful because they're manufacturers.

Q: Right. Right.
A: They're apparel manufacturers, and all they did was acquire other apparel companies. But they knew how to run them. And they knew how to work on it.
Same thing with... Warnaco... Warnaco went through some bad years because Jack Field, who was the Chairman, didn't know his business and didn't do a good job. He was a good acquirer, but not a good manager. So now they've got this fellow, Jim Walker, who's turned it around and he's doing a hell of a good job. But again, they're all apparel people. They never were anything else. And they never acquired anything else, but apparel companies. So those fellows will make it. The fellows who come in from the outside, like Lehigh Valley Industries...

You know, what the hell do they know about the dress business? You know. Nothing. Any of those fellows. They just don't understand it. Now General Mills has been lucky, you see, in that sense, that they left us alone, pretty much. As soon as they start to interfere, they're going to have problems too. You see. But right now, as of now, they haven't had any. But they have had other not successful operations, like Kimberly, which is a good company. Ship 'n Shore they lost their shirt with the first couple of years. All of these people have to have apparel people running them, and when they don't have them, they're in deep trouble.

But the whole game has changed, with the invasion of conglomerates and corporate giants into the business. And I see now where Bluebell is in trouble. And they were as strong as hell for years. So, I don't know, where it's going to wind up. But I think there will always be plenty of room in the dress industry--and the apparel industry--for innovative, entrepreneur young people. They will bring to it what the big guys don't have, which is ideas. Imagination. Style. This is what it's all about. You see, these big companies don't have any imagination, and they cut down on the imagination. They get everything on computers. You can't put style on computers. And this is where the big... in a sense, benefits the young
people, still. When they come out, and two or three young guys start a company, they'll do well in spite of all the big companies, because what's going to be lacking as time goes on, in the industry, is imagination and style and inventiveness.

Q: Perhaps also the ability to move fast.

A: Yeah. The big guys move like elephants and the little guys move like mice. They go fast. They have to be quick. So that's the big difference. And, of course, the impersonal type of thing that exists today. Even in the companies. People don't mix the way they used to mix. You know, we used to have Christmas parties for all the employees, and all kinds of things. But that's gone. Just the cold blooded, bottom line stuff.

Q: Your role now at Crystal is really that of a counselor, so to speak. You're the Chairman Emeritus, right?

A: Right.

Q: Now...Then, let's do what I have been wanting so much to do...

Back to the beginning of your history and let's talk about you.

A: About me. Well...Have you got a few days?

Q: Sure, as much time as you like.

A: Well...When I got out of college I went to work for Union Carbide.

Q: Well, could you start before that? I mean, I'm interested in before that too.

A: You mean high school?

Q: Anything. When were you born?

A: In New York City.
Q: And when.
A: In 1907.
Q: Okay. And...
A: Now that's not for publication.
Q: Well, it's in a couple of reference books.
A: It is?
Q: Oh, yeah. Besides which, I think it's marvelous to be like you and be 75 years old. I think it's fantastic.
A: Yeah, well, I enjoy it very much. Yeah. My health is good and...
Q: Yeah, you look great....
A: And I do everything everybody else does..
Q: That's marvelous. Okay. So, you were born in New York. And you went to high school in New York.
A: No. I went to high school in New Rochelle. We moved out of New York when I was like three years old.
Q: And what business was your father in?
A: My father was in the heavy contracting business. The building business.
Q: Was he an entrepreneur?
A: No, he was...He worked for other people. But he was a very successful guy. He was a big man, for those days. They used to call him "Big Bill Draddy," and he had a million friends. Which was important in that kind of business. But in those days, when they were building railroads and all kinds of things, all the reservoirs and all that stuff...
Q: I guess what I'm trying to find out is where you got your entrepreneurial and competitive spirit.

A: Well, I think I got my competitive spirit from football.

Q: Oh, really. Okay. Well then...

A: One hundred percent. I think...Well, I think you're born with a certain amount of competitiveness. Or born with a certain amount of aggressiveness, if you want to call it...I was a kid...just a little kid...I would fight anybody, and sometimes three or four kids at a time. You know...I mean, I was unafraid of anything, in that sense...

Q: You mean at the age of 10 or 12?

A: Yeah...Or even earlier than that.

Q: Even earlier.

A: My father used to say to the other men around in the general neighborhood, "Bring your kid over and I'll fight him." You know...And I was picked out one time...We got into trouble with a bunch of other people, and the father of one of the kids...big kid...Came outside and said "Now you boys have been causing a lot of trouble. My son'll fight any one of you." And he looked at me and he said, "You. He'll fight you." And I'm the littlest one there. So I beat the hell out of the guy. So anyway, I was always a leader, of all the kids, and I played football when I was a young kid, before I even went to high school. We had these teams, little pickup teams..

Q: Little League...

A: And we'd go around and play kids in other neighborhoods. So...

Q: This is still in Manhattan...
A: No, this is in New Rochelle. All my life was in New Rochelle, basically. So then I went to high school, and I made the team right away. And we had big guys on our team. We had a good team. And I was... When I was fifteen years old I was on the varsity team. We had guys 18, 19, years old... Then I became captain of the team and the star fullback, and all that stuff, and I was captain of the team for two years, in high school, and we only lost like one game, I think. But then I went to Manhattan College.... Well, in the meantime, we were very successful, so success in high school, with girls and everything, is quite an event, and particularly in a place like New Rochelle. In those days we had just a lot of nice people, and we'd have a party, and if I made the winning touchdown and we won the championship... and all the girls at the party... and I stood there, and each one came by and gave me a kiss, you know. That kind of stuff. This builds up your ego. And I always got along with women. This was just something that was never a problem with me. So then I went to college and was captain of the football team in college. And I went there on a football scholarship, and they paid all my expenses—tuition—all of that. And then I... When I got out of school I went to work for Union Carbide Company. And that was tough. Tough, tough work. It was in the Depression. 1932... '31, '32. You can't believe how bad it was. I mean, people who didn't live in that time have no conception. They talk today, about it, being unemployed... You have no idea how bad it was. I mean... You'd go to... I'd go to towns in Pennsylvania, there wouldn't be anybody workin in the town. And hadn't worked in maybe a year. The poor local grocer was up to his head in debt because all his people couldn't pay him, and this kind of stuff. So that's where I got a real education. The four years that I worked in the coal fields
for Union Carbide Company... You never in your life... could you encounter such difficult selling conditions. Everything was closed down. All the mines were closed down. Everything was closed down. And yet I still had to sell, right? And I had to work like a dog. And I used to have to talk like a dog, too. To get these people... They didn't want to listen to you. They didn't want to talk to you. Because they didn't want to buy anything. Anyway... four years of that... I attribute my selling ability, which I later developed, you know, pretty good, to the tough, tough selling that I had to do on the road. The tough, tough listeners. Now, it's one thing to go in and talk to a buyer. Be nice and friendly, and tell her you'd like her to see the line, and all that stuff. That's simple. But to walk into a place with four or five hard nosed miners around, chewing tobacco and spitting on the stove, and this kind of stuff. And this is real stuff. And then have to make your speech, in front of these guys, when they're all looking at you like you came out of Oz or someplace. Because... I'm probably the only guy they ever saw with a tie on. These guys were all tough nuts guys. So I went in... I'll never forget one experience I had. I walked into this one coal company up in Pennsylvania, a little north of Pittsburgh. And I knock on the door and he says, "Come in." And I walk in and there's a guy reading a newspaper. And he doesn't put the newspaper down. He says, "Whadda ya want," and...

Q: You said...

A: He said, "Whaddya want?" And I said, "Well I came to talk to you about your carbide needs." He says, "Well, I don't need any." So I said, "Well, I'd like to talk to you about it anyway." And he said, "Go ahead. Talk." And he
never puts the paper down. So I talked for about 20 minutes. I told him what good quality our carbide was, the yield per pound that you got, and all this stuff. So, he says, "Well, not interested pal. See ya some other time." So I said, "Well, when can I..?" And he says, "I don't know." And he never put the paper down. And I walked out of the office. I said, "Thank you very much." I never saw the guy's face. Can you believe that? Well, that's the kind of selling I had to do. When you get through with that stuff, coming to New York and getting into the dress business--and calling on nice girls--it's like shooting fish in a barrel. So, that's an experience that you can't buy. You won't get it in college. You won't get it anywhere, except where I got it. And I was lucky. I was lucky that they sent me out on the road, to these terrible mining towns. And you'd never believe how poor these people were. I mean, they wouldn't have anything. Nothing.

Q: Did you ever come back to New York during your trips?

A: Oh, sure. Sure. See, I traveled most of the time. I'd go up to Albany, where I did a turn up there for about a year. Then I stayed in Albany and came home weekends. I could drive it down in about three hours. But this experience was really wonderful. So when I got into the dress business...My God...You didn't have to travel. You didn't have to pack and unpack...I used to have to...Listen to this. You'll appreciate why it was such great training. Every night, after I made the calls, during the day--which I had to make at least ten--And boy, sometimes making ten was hard, because it was far apart, you know. I'd have to come back to the hotel, or motel, or whatever. I'd sit down, and write on the typewriter, who I saw; I'd fill in how many miners worked in the mine, what kind of carbide they
used prior to my visit, so on and so forth...And go to the post office and mail it that night.

Q: Every day?

A: Every day. Boy, I tell you. That was some tough job. But...

If you didn't want the job, they had 50 guys waiting for it. If you didn't like it, then goodbye. No problem. I worked...I went to work for them, I got $38 a week. At the end of a year, they gave me a 10% cut.

Q: Oh, gracious!

A: Yeah. The absolute truth. And hard work. I'm on the road, you know, working like a dog. Doing reports at the end of the day. At the end of the second year, I get another 10% cut.

Q: And things were still so bad that you had to accept that?

A: Oh, sure. Of course. You know, like they would let 300-400 guys go at one time. But I missed all of that because I worked like a horse. And I sent in good reports. I sent them in on time. And that's where I learned the discipline of working. Now, a lot of guys didn't do it and they all got fired. They left, never made a success. But because I did it, this is what gave me the strength. And I have always been able to impart that to other people. Even today, I walk into a place and I say "What the hell are you doin wearing brown shoes with a blue suit? You're in the fashion business. Don't you know any better than that?"

Two designers...I gave them hell. But people like to be helped. They like to be told. They like to be advised. And one of the troubles with a lot of corporations is they get too far away from the people. There's no intimacy with their workers. And they get lost a little bit. And they don't perform as well. And I always stayed very close to everybody. All the people today, they keep saying, "Oh, Mr.
Draddy, if you'd only come back. We just love you to be here. We know we get things done. We know we could come and talk to you." And I say, "Well, I'll come in a few days and you can talk with me." But that's the problem I think. It's kind of sad, in a way, but big corporations are heartless. They really don't have a heart. And I think one of the successes of our business, which has continued, has been the heart. You know, having a heart, you see. Of course, there are a lot of other things necessary too, but I mean, that's just one of them.

Q: Sure.
A: But, they...See, all the people I hired...
Q: Wait...Before you hired them....Now, we're at 1934.
A: Yeah.
Q: Okay. And...you have been quoted as saying you married the boss's daughter and then had to work twice as hard as anybody else.
A: That's right. That's exactly right. I married Ruthie, who was my wife for 44 years, and I started my salary with David Crystal with $50.
Q: Oh, you had a promotion.
A: Big deal. Right? $50 a week. And I worked the first six years there without a day off or a vacation. That's what you had to do. Business was tough. People were hard to sell. I would come in on a Saturday. I'll never forget, there was a buyer named Drule...God, I'll never forget her. Originally from J.W. Robinson, then she went to Magnin's, then she went to Marshall Fields, then she went to Saks. Then she went back to Westwood, California and opened a very fine shop of her own. And I went out to see her a few times, actually, later on in years. And, of course, she finally died. But she was tough as hell. But smart
as hell. And I learned a lot from her. And she...

Q: Those were the days when you could learn from buyers.

A: Oh, absolutely. Good buyer. No question about it. So I...
She said to me, "I don't want to work during the week. Too much confusion, too much noise. Would you come in on Saturday?" Saturday. You've been working hard all week, you like to take Saturday off. So, I said, "Sure, I'll come in." Anything to get an order. So I'd come in and work with her on Saturday. So it would ruin my whole weekend, really, because I'd have to come back into work on Monday. But I loved the business. So it wasn't any big deal. Doing what you like is half the battle.

Q: Absolutely.

A: If you don't like it, forget it. I told kids...I just made a speech up at Manhattan College to the business school...And I said to them "Don't get into anything you don't like. Because somebody told you it's good, or you think you should be in it, or your father said you should be in it. Don't do it." You know. This is just a philosophy, but I believe when people are happy doing something, they do it better. If they're not happy in a job, they don't do it as well. Because they're really not happy. And all they're trying to see is what time to go home. How fast the day will go, or something like that. People who really love their job, they almost have to do well. Because it's...I used to get such a kick out of getting a big order, that I would actually get a warm feeling of contentment. After I had gotten a big order I counted it up and it was 850 dresses or something, and I was maybe only supposed to get 400, but by pushing and working hard on it, I could get the order up, it was to me like winning a
game. A football game. Because that's the competitiveness, which you acquire playing football. To do better all the time. To win the game. To win the stakes. I think this is the attitude that made our company successful. Never taking no for an answer. And winning. Trying to win. Because every season, you had to win the game that season, and then you have another season, and you've got to win that one. And I think that's what...that spirit...And I started to say, all the people who are still at Crystal, who are successful, who became successful managers and department heads and so forth...I hired them all. Now, I don't know what's going to happen when they start bringing in other people. See, we've got our main nucleus force still there. Like Herb Rosenstein, who runs our children's wear division. Geez, he's making so much money for the company, it isn't even funny...

Q: So, you're talking about the day when people like that retire or move away...

A: And I'm worried, because I don't know what the hell is gonna happen. The jokers they bring in are not the same guys that I hired. I don't think they know...

Q: When you say "they..."

A: I'm talking about General Mills.

Q: General Mills. But is this not an area where Jack Holmes will still be...?

A: Well, see, Jack is the President. But they...See, when I was there, I didn't even bother with any of this stuff. I wouldn't even go to their meetings. They'd have some Harvard professor come...I said this to the chairman.
I said, "What the hell am I going to learn from a Harvard business guy? He doesn't know his--from Tuesday about the dress business. Fabrics, fit, color... He doesn't know any of that stuff. And that's what I have to know. I don't have to know what he knows." All I know is one thing: you have to have a good product, and you have to sell it to somebody. Now there's nothing he's going to be able to teach me about that. I'm just wasting a day or two days to come out and listen to some guy who I'll never pay any attention to anyway. That was me. Now, Jack's not that way. Jack's going along with them. He'll go there...They've got a meeting today, for Christ's sakes. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday....They're going to be out somewhere on Long Island listening to a bunch of professors theorize about certain things. As far as I'm concerned, that's not the dress business. Now, I know I'm a....They probably think I'm a nut. Because I don't subscribe to all this Harvard Business School stuff. I don't. I think those guys...If they're so God damned smart, why is everybody in trouble? Why's our country in trouble? Why's our economy in trouble? There are millions of these guys around. What are they doing? They only do one thing, when things are good, they're good. When things are lousy, they don't know what the hell to do. We had to go through tough times, and we had to make it work...

Q: Go back to 1940. What was the situation then, at the company.

That was just before the war. The Second World War, I mean.

A: Yeah. Well, actually, the turn around came, see, just before the war. We were coming out of the Depression. The Depression was '30, '31, '32, '33, '34,...'35 things started to move a little bit. In 1937, we got a hold of a fabric called cruisaline. Now, we were always fabric minded, as opposed to just
making dresses. See, the big difference between our group of people, those fellows I mentioned, we were fabric guys more. The rest of them were dress designers, who just took normal fabric and made a dress out of it. And the style of the dress was what would sell it. Ours was so because of fabric, and that was the big difference. So we got a hold of this crusaline, and it was unbelievable. It was a bonanza. And here was a fabric that they had been stuck with in the market for four years. Mallinson had it and couldn't move the grey goods. Couldn't sell it to anybody. Ten cents a yard they were willing to sell it for. Couldn't sell it. So a guy named Jack Maisch who was a designer...You might have met him somewhere along the line...

Q: I'm trying to think how to spell it.

A: M-a-i-s-c-h...He was French. He was a real Frenchman. French guy. Nice guy. And a good designer. Fabric designer. Really a printer, is what he was. So he came up with this design, and it was a cross dyed fabric, so they dyed it to get away from the cross dye effect, and then printed it and they did what they called extract printing which gave a nice depth perception to the print. Well, we got a hold of this thing and just sold dresses, like tons of them. For those days, it was unbelievable. Normally, the summer business would cut off in June 1st. We were still making dresses, summer dresses, in July. It was tremendous, lengthening out of the season. So, to make a long story short, we made a lot of money with it. Then we kept milking that fabric. Every year we'd have a whole bunch of prints, beautiful prints. We came out with a group of wedgewood patterns, which I...Which goes to show you how you think, in your imagination. I was up in Bonwit Teller, and they had some linen dresses in there. And they had
some Wedgwood prints on the linen dresses. And I said, "Geez, that's a good looking print." So I got a hold of Jack Maisch, and I said "Go up to Bonwit Teller and look at these dresses, and you'll see some good looking prints." But there were a limited amount of dresses. So he went up and he came back, and he made up a series of patterns, and geez, it was just like an explosion. Now, that kept us busy all through '37, '38, '39 and '40. Now, when '41 came along, we had a whole different set of problems. I'll never forget, when we got into the war, we had a meeting of all the manufacturers, and you never saw or heard such laments in your life, about what was going to happen in the future. We were all going to be out of business. In a year. Nobody was going to buy any clothes, because their husbands, their sons all would be getting killed in the war, and there would be nothing but black dresses. And Bill Holmes, who was then the President of Bonwit Teller, I had lunch with him, and he was down in the bottom of the barrel. He said, "We may as well close up." This is how they thought. So I went to Sears, Roebuck...

Q: Yes, I think we have that story.
A: Yes...Okay. So anyways. That's what I did keep myself alive, and all the other guys were gonna go bust.

Q: Right. Now, at that point you were 34 years old. Fast arithmetic...
A: In 1937...I was 30 years old. Yeah.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm talking about 1940 or 1941...What was happening to you in your own life. Obviously...You mentioned a few minutes ago that you seldom had your Saturdays to play your golf....Which meant that you loved that sport a long time ago.
A: Oh, yes.

Q: And... Had your children been born yet?

A: No... Well, Vinnie was born in '36 and Diane was born in '37.

Yeah. The two of them.

Q: And were you living up in this area, still?

A: We were living up in New Rochelle.

Q: In New Rochelle.

A: I moved here in 1943. Two years after the war started. It was a dumb time to move, but I had a chance to buy this house. This very house. So... I bought the house and we moved up here, and I acquired the land across the street, and I acquired the swimming pool area, and then I built a pool. That came later. Much later. But the point is that things were starting to move. And things were getting better. Now, when it came to the war... instead of what they said thought was going to happen just the reverse happened. All the women went to work in factories. They were making plenty of money. You couldn't buy a car. You couldn't buy a new refrigerator. You couldn't buy anything. The only thing you could buy were clothes. So the clothing business... The women coming out of the factories with $250 a week, you know.... They started buying better clothes and coats, and all of it. So with the result that, instead of it going down, it went up. And I had made a deal, in 1938 or '39, with a gabardine company. They're out of business now. Lorain Manufacturing Company. God, you can't believe all the guys who're out of business. And Zoltan Rosenberg had a gabardine...

Q: How do you spell Lorain by the way? Lorain Manufacturing, because I don't know that name. The manufacturing company that you just mentioned.
A: Oh, Lorain.

Q: Lor-ain...

A: Lorain. Yeah. They're up in Massachusetts. And they made a very good gabardine. The best one was made by...Rosenberg was the only one who could get it. Anyway, to make a long story short, I got this gabardine and I made a deal with this guy. And I don't know what made me make the deal, because I'd never bought fabric in that quantity. But from the moment I told him, I'd got a hold of a good gabardine, he says, "You'll make a lot of money." Anyway, this guy walked into my office, and I said, "Do you have any gabardine?" And he said, "Yeah, I got a good piece," and he showed me the fabric. I said, "Okay. I'll buy 100 pieces, that's 6,000 yards." And it was about $1.97 a yard, which in those days was a big investment. But you've got to confine it. You can't sell it to anybody else. So he says, "You got a deal." We wrote out the order, we signed it and everything. Now, when the war broke out, the one thing that everybody wanted was gabardine, and I had all I could use and everybody begging for it. I used to have buyers come into my office...cry....You can't believe it. He used to come in and cry. "Mr. Draddy, you must give me some gabardine dresses, or I'm gonna lose my job. My boss said "Where are your gabardine dresses?" And I said "I don't have any," and he said, "Well, God damn it, go down to the market and get some." "And there was only one place to go. Me. That lasted until 1945. And after the war was over, the gabardine dresses, it was just like you took a big axe and chopped off the tail of a cat. Just stopped cold. Everywhere. Maine. Seattle. Texas. Florida. Anywhere...But it all stopped at the same time. But we got out of the goods. Finally. But that was....Those were years we made a lot
of money, because there were no markdowns, not returns, just profits. Because Uncle Sam took his share! He got 85% of what you made. But you were able to do a lot of things. We fixed the plants up and larger factories, and all that stuff. So that was pretty much through the forties. Then Mr. Dior came out, in 1947, and he really changed the whole business. Jesus...He was a great designer. There's no question about it. And he came out with a line of long skirts and things that were so unusual and so different looking, and I'll never forget...This is a very cute story and very true....The women in Dallas, Texas...Neiman Marcus, you know, were always very much in the forefront of fashion. So, Stanley bought all this stuff and made the windows, the Dior windows, and, of course, everything you had in your wardrobe now was obsolete. Completely but...There wasn't any chance of wearing anything...Because you're gonna look like an old frau. So the women in Dallas got together, and said this was unfair to women, and they started marching around the store, a whole bunch of them, and they kept looking at the windows as they were marching around the store. And every once in a while one of them would drop off, and another would drop off. Finally, the women who were marching around the store bought all the God damned dresses, and there was nobody left in line.

Q: That's funny.

A: That's a true story. And that's what happened to the dress business. Dior changed it overnight. But he did a lot of good things. He now made wide skirts, full skirts, which used much more material...

Q: Yes, you no longer had L85 to worry about.

A: That's right. That's gone, see. That's why it was gone. Be-
cause that's why he came out with all these full skirts and, oh, just...He was really...Of all the designers he was, in my opinion, a true designer, of the last 50 years. A lot of the other guys are phony guys, you know. But...I made a deal with Dior, and it was a tremendous deal, for me. He would agree to design a line for us, exclusive to the United States. He would manufacture in the United States, at our prices. Well, he sent us a beautiful line. First line. Absolutely gorgeous. And we reproduced it religiously, button for button and fabric for fabric. We even bought the fabric in Europe so we could reproduce them and make them look as accurate...Well, we did such a job, you couldn't believe it. We did so well, and our prices were so good, that all his regular customers started to complain like hell. You know...He had a specialty shop, in Milwaukee, who bought his line. It was exclusive. And then we came along and sold the department store, this other stuff...And they couldn't compete with us. So, they had so much headaches with it that they finally came to me and said, "Look, you guys are killing us. And you're making em so good, we didn't think you made clothes that well. That you could make it that well at that price. I can't believe it. "So we were in the midst of renegotiating the contract, and I had lunch with him at the Waldorf. I'll never forget it. And he was breathing very hard...(imitates)...  
Q: This was Dior himself...?
A: Yeah. He was a fat guy, you know. He loved to eat, and.... (imitates) and that's what he was doing while he was eating, and I said to Morgan...Morgan Fauth...You remember him don't you...?
Q: Sure, very well.
A: He went with me. And we came back, riding back in the cab, and I said, "Morgan, I don't think Dior's got long to go. I really don't" And he said, "Well, I don't think so either." So, I call my insurance agent, that I'm makin a new deal with him. I said, "I want you to go to Europe, examine Dior, and see if you can get me an insurance policy on his life, because I'm going out to invest a lot of money with him, right? Because if the guy dies, I'm out in left field, right?" So, anyway, the insurance man went to Europe...He was going anyway. But he never got together with Dior. So when he came back, I said "What happened?" So he said, "Well I couldn't....He was in Southern France, and I was someplace else. And we just never could get together." But he says, "I'll go back another time and get it." Because, I wanted to make sure he could get a policy. That was the thing. So he died about six months later. Never had the contract...But it didn't make any difference to me at that point, because I hadn't gone into any depth...See, we could just manufacture in our own plants anyway. But, the stuff was so beautiful. It was unbelievable how good he was. So, anyway, he was an awful nice guy. And I saw Rouet the other night...

Q: Yes, Right.

A: And he's now got a deal with Warnaco mostly on men's wear, and he reminded me of the luncheon we had, and then we came up here, working on the contract. But we had a lot of people like that. I had Pucci, completely alone. I made a deal with Pucci in 1951, and exclusive for the United States, before anybody knew Pucci. They had their Italian designer fashion show in...I think it was...not Milan.

Q: No. Florence.
A: Florence. That's right. And I made a deal with him. He was a great designer too. But we'd get the stuff six months after we needed it. So I finally said to him, "Look, if you can't deliver the stuff on time, then we can't make a deal. We can't go on with the deal." See, I was supposed to get stuff, like, say, 'in March for the fall, and I'd get it in June...it would shoot the whole ballgame. That one, I let him go, and then he came out with a men's line--and of course we were in the men's business. And he wanted to give it to me exclusively. And I said, "Okay, I'll make a deal with you." You couldn't believe the line, how bad it was. The worst looking clothes you ever saw in your life. So I called his lawyer over--I knew his lawyer; a guy named Fitzgerald--And I said, "Look, I know you're not in the fashion business. And I know you don't know anything about fashion, you're a lawyer. But I want to show you the stuff that he sent me and I want you to tell me, would you buy one of them?"

He looks at them, about 20 shirts, and he said, "Geez, he must be drunk or something." And I said, "You can say that again." So I canned that deal too. But I used to do...We used to do a lot of importing...And...

End of Tape 2, Side 1
A: ...French tennis star of the twenties. We made a line of clothes with her name on it. Tennis clothes, mind you. This was before tennis... it was practically nothing. And we had a tennis line with her. And we also later had Alice Marble. Do you remember her? She was that very beautiful, blonde, Californian who was a good tennis player? So we've always promoted these kind of people and designers, and athletes and so forth. Since way, way back.

Q: And it really is all attributable to the fact that you, yourself, are such a sports person. That your interest is so strong...

A: Well, that's right...

Q: And you managed to relate it with your business...

A: Well, I don't know if I told you the story about how I got into the men's business. I went down to...

Q: In Bermuda, you mean...

A: It was Nassau.

Q: In Nassau. With men's shirts.

A: Well, there was a perfect example of my involvement in golf, that got us into a whole new... Today, do you know how much we're doing in the men's business? $350 million...

Q: Oh. Heavens... How much does David Crystal do overall?

A: Five hundred million...

Q: $500 million. All right. Now, in 1951, which you had mentioned as the year, you became President, right?

A: Well, I think it was '51. Around that time.

Q: Of the whole...
A: Of all of David Crystal. Well, I started all the companies. See, when I went with David Crystal, it was just a dress business. Period. That was it. And that was all it was until...I'm just trying to think...I started a suit business--Izod of London--and then the war came along and knocked that out. Then in 1947, I started the men's business, and then in '53 I started the suit business. And in '47, I think, I started the Haymaker business. All of these businesses I started. And the children's wear business, which is the most recent, is only about...It must be about 12...No, 15 years ago. But such a business you can't believe. And I started it...Now, that shows you...That's what bugs me with these God damned big corporations. I was...did everything myself practically. I was the Personnel Manager, and I hired all of them...How long does it take to hire somebody? You look at them, you like them, you hire them or your don't hire them. Period. You can do it in five minutes. We have 27 people in the Personnel Department.

Q: At Crystal.

A: At Crystal. Twenty-seven people. For crying out loud. We don't need'em. I'm telling you. But anyway, we use to do practically everything ourselves. So that when you got something, like the dress business, the children's business, I started it with no designer, no sales people, just three little dresses. They had ducks on them. You know, embroidered ducks. And finally we started to do a little business and branch out a little bit. I took an office that was an office and made it into a little showroom. Hired a guy to come in and be the Sales Manager. But no capital investment. None. Because I used everything that we already had. People and space, right? Now, today, we'll do
$150 million, in children's wear, and this was only 13 years ago. And we'll...
I can't tell you how much we'll make, but it's a lot of money. A lot of money. Now, that was started from scratch. I started the Haymaker Company from scratch. Two blouses, with hand made buttons. This is what I'm talking about. Imagination and thinking, which is gone. Except in the small people. Big companies don't think like that. They want to start another company, they invest half a million dollars. Half a million dollars! Which they lost...
That was that thing that they got Gloria Gelfand in....

Q: Picato....
A: Picato....And I told them, I said, "Don't do it. You're gonna make a mistake and lose your brains if you go into that thing." "Well, we got to get somebody else. We want to start a business..." I said, "I know, but that isn't the way to do it. If you want to start it from scratch, I'll start it from scratch. I'll show you how to start it from scratch. And I mean real scratch. It won't cost you any money." No, they had to hire a designer; hire her; hire a production man. I interviewed the production man, for them; they asked me to do that...And I said, "Don't buy him. Don't touch him. He's no damn good. He doesn't know what the hell he's talkin' about." They did it anyway. Six months later, he was gone, and a year later the whole thing was gone. A half a million dollar loss. So, you see, they just don't understand it and they never will. The only people who understand the business are guys like myself who've been in the business...I started every company that we have with no capital.

Q: That's extraordinary. It really is.
A: No capital. Just utilized people...and space. Something you
already have.

Q: Let's go back to your chronology, because I don't want to lose it. In 1951, you became the President. And that...

A: Right. Let me go back a little bit... If I can help you. In 1941, when France was invaded and it looked like we were losing the war, and we were losing it in Europe, Dave Crystal got very frightened. He was scared of wars anyway, and he was scared of really losing money, and so on and so forth. So he said, "I want to go and live in Florida." And he was young then... He was only 58 at the time. And he said, "I'll let you guys have the business. Just give me X number of dollars a year..."

Q: You guys being...

A: His two sons and me. Yeah. So, we said, "Fine. Go ahead, go live in Florida, and we'll give you $25,000 a year." (Which in those days was pretty good money for doing nothing.) And he got scared to death. So he went down and moved out. Actually, I started to run the business right then, see. So becoming President was something that could have been done right then, because I was the guy that did all the thinking and all the work—Phil worked in the factory, with the factory and the union, but he had nothing to do with the customers. He didn't get along with the customers.

Q: He's not there anymore?

A: Oh, no. They're all... They left. I told everybody. I said, "When we sell this business to General Mills, Phil Crystal won't stay a year. He'll take that money and run like a thief." And that's what happened with many people. Bob Crystal stayed for two more years, then he left. And I was still here.
Q: But there is still a Crystal in the business.
A: Gary. The son of Bob. Whom we gave a job to years ago. He's a nice guy. Not a brilliant guy, but he's a nice guy. So he's just there... He works in the Haymaker division. But... So, actually, from that point on I ran the business, and' actually became President in I think '52 or '51...
Q: Fifty-one. I have it in my notes.
A: And then I just stayed President for all those years. And then Jackie Holmes came into the business, around 20 some odd years ago. And he's...
Q: 1962 or thereabouts...
A: He went through the ranks, selling and doing all the work... And then when... I don't remember exactly when it was... I became Chairman of the Board and Jackie became President...
Q: I wanted to ask you... He and your daughter were married, right?
Q: Right. Because you are the grandfather of a very handsome...
A: Yeah. Jackie Holmes is the father of the kids. Yeah. So Jackie's now the Chief Executive Officer, and he does most of the work--all of the work, from that point of view. Jack's a wonderful guy, but his management style is quite different from mine. I was much more aggressive and much more, in a sense, imaginative. Jack is much more of an administrator. He likes that kind of work and he's good at it. But as far as innovation or style values, I don't know if he has them or not. I mean, I think he has them, but I don't think he uses them. I think he prefers to be an administrator, and operate in that area.
Q: So that probably at this point, actually, each of the divisions
must be more autonomous.

A: Oh, they are. Yeah. We have good designers in the Izod Department. And they're two young guys and they're very capable as far as the styling goes...As a matter of fact, it's never been a problem...You can always handle manufacturing. That's mechanical, you know. Ideas is what's the life's blood of our business. Just for example, suppose I hadn't gotten the alligator on exclusive basis, where would I be today.

Q: Right. It would be quite different.

A: Completely different. Might not even be in business.

Q: Now, you are calling it "the alligator."

A: Sure.

Q: For a few years, apparently, it was changing...

A: Well, that goes way back. And I'll give it to you quickly. The alligator...The original alligator insignia was owned by Alligator Raincoat Company of St. Louis. They were a separate raincoat company that made only raincoats, and very good ones for a long time. But they got into trouble too, because the management got old and the factory got old, and they still trying to...At the end it was costing them more to make a raincoat than they were selling them for. And you know how long you can go on that way. Anyway, they had the rights to the alligator. We had a lawsuit with them, and we came up with a wonderful deal, for us. I don't know how they ever agreed to it. They gave us the right to use the alligator on shirts in perpetuity, paying no royalty to them.

Q: Good heavens.

A: Right. Some deal, eh? Well that...You've got to negotiate. So
then they kept going down hill and I was afraid that somebody else would buy them...get the name...So I bought it. I got General Mills to buy them, and we paid them...Not very much money, a million and a quarter, something like that. Which is cheap now. And then we got the rights to the name forever, because nobody could ever' get them. But if we hadn't done that but now the name "alligator" belongs to us, or crocodile, either one. All reptile type of insignia belong to us. So that that was a stroke of genius in the sense that we were able to manipulate that. And I was dealing with a very tough guy. That little Riklis, you know, who owns all those...

Q: Meshulam.

A: Yeah. That guy. He's a nice guy. I had breakfast with him. He was so interested in big money...That million and a quarter didn't really mean anything to him. It really didn't. Like, asking for a dollar. So I went with my lawyer and we talked about it, and I said, "I'd like to buy the company because...for a lot of things...And I know you're not doing well." And he said, "How do you know I'm not doing well?" And I said, "I know you're not. I can tell you you're losing $8 a coat." So he was flabbergasted that I could have that kind of information, which he couldn't have. See. He didn't have it because he'd never asked for it. He could have found it out. But anyway, he didn't. So, he said, "Well, you go ahead and see (and he named one of the guys down at the company)..." He said "You go ahead and deal with him, and I'll tell him that I'm interested in selling, and you make the money deal." So I said, "Okay." So I went down and I saw the guy and we haggled for a bit, and I finally bought it.

Q: About what year was that. Do you remember?
A: Let me think now. I would think it was probably in the end of the fifties. Toward the end of the fifties. Something like that. See, I started negotiating with General Mills in '67...fifteen years ago. I don't believe the time has gone that fast. So, that was when I started. And then we wound up a year later making the deal. But it was prior to that time...No, I guess it wasn't. I guess it was about that same time. I had to get the money from them. They okayed it, to go ahead and spend that kind of money. But that was probably 14 years ago. Thirteen, 14 years ago. But that solved a lot of problems for us. We didn't have any more lawsuits, and we were able to sue people and get them off...

Q: Yes, that is one thing that you've had...You've had to protect your trademark a lot, haven't you?

A: In 19...I don't remember the year...When we first started to get knocked off, by my friend at Cluett Peabody...He was a good friend of mine. Well, not a good friend, but a friend. And they knocked us off, and came up with a double page spread in Women's Wear and...Men's and Women's, and called it the "Burma" shirt, and it had an alligator just like ours, right on the shirt. No pretense at all. Same collar, same sleeve, same everything. So we went to court with them, and we sued them. At the same time we sued 185 different infringers that year. And my lawyers used to say to me...And this is another thing...What you learn from football, or what I learned from football. You never quit. My lawyer said to me, "Look, Vin, I think we're going to lose the battle here. There's too many people infringing. This thing is practically in public domain." I said, "Listen, if we don't beat these guys, I got nothing. And I would have nothing to sell, because everybody and his brother would make them. We're going to fight'em.
right to the end." Now Cluett Peabody is a big company. And they had a Sullivan & Cromwell, one of the big law firms downtown. And they said, "We'll go to court. We don't think you have any rights to it. You've lost your rights years ago, because people have been doing this two and a half, three years now, putting alligators on shirts, and you guys never did anything about it." Well, I couldn't do anything about it, because I was fighting with the raincoat company. And until I got settled with them, I couldn't.... So I was between crossfire. So I said, anyway, we'll sue'em....

Q: What was the year of your suit with Cluett Peabody?
A: Infringement. Trademark.
Q: What year. About...
A: Oh, it was probably, I would say, the late sixties. So...And the funny part...I had played golf with Barry Leethead and we were now in the lawsuit. So we didn't say anything about it to each other, so when I left him I said, "Well, Barry, I'll see you in court." Kind of giving him the needle, see. Well, the important thing is this. Cluett Peabody went right down to the wire, claiming that they were going to court. And we had Simon Rifkind in those days...as our trial lawyer, and he's a tough guy. And, of course, we had the rights. There wasn't any question about it...We were right. So, anyway...And I told Barry. I called him up before the lawsuit came into court, and I said, "Barry, you know, you guys have all kinds of labels--Sanforized, Arrow--all these that you protect all the time. How can you in justice infringe another guy's trademark. I don't understand it. Of all the people in the world, you should know better." So he said, "Well, they told me it's in public...." And I said, "Well, they're telling
you wrong." So, we went...The day we go to court, Cluett Peabody said "We'll give up." But we wouldn't let them just give up. We made them write a letter that recognized our rights to the trademark forever. We put it to them hard. Which they agreed to do. Because now they can get into a hell of a lawsuit by us. You see. So, once we got that letter, we just photostated it and sent it to all the other infringers, with a letter saying, here, Cluett Peabody just realized they have no rights, and you better drop your...stop doing what you're doing or we'll get after you too." So that eliminated it. Now, they're knocking it off again. Now you've got a different kind of people. Those were the legitimate houses. Now you have all these crazy people, who'll put any label of any kind of any thing. It's gotten to be a real...I think whosis has got a hell of a problem...

Q: Calvin Klein.
A: Gucci too.
Q: Oh, Gucci. Oh, sure.
A: They get copied every God damned thing they make. And they put the Gucci label on it and sell it as a Gucci. And they've got enough retailers who'll buy that...And have like an off-price sale. So it's gotten to be a terrible, terrible thing. We're getting hurt. Whosis, the little guy, Lauren?
Q: Ralph Lauren.
A: Lauren's getting hurt like hell, now. And he doesn't have the protection we have. I don't think his mark protects...
Q: The polo player?
A: I don't think so. No. Because polo players have always been in
pictures and...It's been use many, many times before. But the alligator is a very distinctive, significant type of motif. So...I saw some in a junk shop on Seventh Avenue yesterday. I saw a knockoff of Lauren. And I don't think he's got the policing organization that we have. See, we've got people around the country who keep looking after these guys and keep reporting and going after them. We have two fellows in Florida who do nothing but that. Detectives, like, you know? You've got to do it, because...

Q: Oh, yes. Absolutely. And now you're at the forefront of trademark protection....

A: Not only that, they made an inferior product. A guy buys one of your shirts, thinking it's yours, and it's a lousy shirt, and it fades and it wrinkles.....What else?

Q: Well, now, let's see. What about advertising? What have been your policies?

A: Well, my policy was...and believe me...for years...I always thought Vogue, Harper's, Mademoiselle, you know, all those magazines were just like window dressing. They gave you a little prestige because people looked at the magazine, but they never sold anything. If you wanted to sell something, put it in the newspaper. Like, we run an ad on dresses, you could sell 4-500 dresses in one day. With a good newspaper ad. You couldn't sell 4-500 dresses with two full pages in Vogue. It just never works that way. So I was always a newspaper advertiser. But I had Vogue promotions and Harper's promotions for the prestigious part of the business. Just to give it a little atmosphere, and stuff. Never expected to sell a hell of a lot. Although we did develop a booklet program from
that which was successful for quite a number of years. But the cost of doing it and the cost of changes...You know, you can do something for about 10-15 years, and maybe that's about the limit.

Q: You haven't thought yet about doing TV?

A: We're doing TV now. Well, of course, TV you get a lot of coverage. But again, it's prestigious advertising. It doesn't sell anything necessarily. Nobody comes in with a taping set, and says "I saw this on TV." But a newspaper ad, a Sunday Times ad, like say with Lord & Taylor or Bonwit Teller or Saks Fifth Avenue, can pull you in a lot of dresses the next day. And it may continue for four or five days afterwards. So I was a great believer in newspaper advertising. And outside of New York, you could buy a lot of newspaper space very cheap. You could go into certain towns and have a full page ad for $100. So I would make a deal with the store--I'll pay half and you pay half. Of the space cost. And we'd run the ad. We had a regular program worked out. And we had ads all over the country. And the good part about that, you see, is that the climate change in the United States is very severe. You can have an ad in Texas in April but you couldn't have it up here in April. It's raining and cold and everything else. You have to wait till May. So with newspaper you can spread the ad around and run them whenever it's the best time to run them.

Q: What about the labor force? I know that in 1905, the business was started with five people. And I do remember reading that the Lacoste shirt, which was made in France for a long time, then was made over here. Is it still made over here, or is it made offshore?

A: No, it's made here. We've probably got one of the biggest, most
modern, up to date, integrated plants in the world. We take the raw cotton, spin it, dye it, finish it, yarn dye it or piece dye it, whichever the case may be, cut the material, make the shirts, from the beginning to the end. All done in one place. And that's probably the only place in the world that does that.?

Q: And where is that place?
A: High Point, North Carolina.
Q: Uh huh. Now, what about your other divisions. Is your manufacturing...

A: Well, now...Wait, let me get...We do a lot of stuff there. See, all shirts are made there. For all divisions. And the shirt business is the principal part of all of our business, with the exception of Haymaker. They have a lot of other things. Haymaker, a lot of their stuff is made here, but they make some stuff overseas. The children's is practically all overseas. They make it better, they make it quicker, they make it at a better price.

Q: Do you use contractors...You don't own all your own factories.
A: Well, down South we do. That big plant down there. That's our own. We own in Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, and one in High Point. But they can handle all our production. They're real big. And they produce a lot of stuff. You can't believe the numbers. I can't believe it myself sometimes. When I think of what used to be a week's production, and what is a week's production today. Jesus Christ. It's frightening. We make 150,000 shirts a week.

Q: Really?
A: Yeah.
Q: That's a lot of shirts.
A: You can say that again.

Q: Well, let me see if I...The way the business...and the localities break down...You have your shows and design rooms, I assume, in 498. Is that right?
A: That's right.

Q: And your pattern making and cutting...Are they done here as well?
A: No, no. No cutting done at all.

Q: Pattern making?
A: No...Well, we have a pattern room here, yeah, but the pattern room is not like it used to be. When you make overseas, you don't make the patterns. They make the patterns. They make their own patterns, so you just buy a finished product, really. But you work on the design with them and you work on the fabric with them and you do everything added...You plan the line and they manufacture it. Really, they're just the contractor. You have all the responsibility. You have the responsibility for the merchandise. If you give them an order, you give a bona fide order for, let's say, 300,000 units or something, and you've got to take the 300,000 units, good, bad or indifferent. Not workmanship, but...You need to sell them. You owe them, you know. But we've got a good association with the Europe...with the Asian market, and we've got fellows that work just for us, and don't work for anybody else. That makes it better too.

Q: Where do you warehouse and distribute?
A: In Reading, Pennsylvania.
Q: And what about your data processing, which I assume...
A: That's all done here in New York... Well, we're moving in fact. We're moving down, we've taken over space, well most of the space, I guess, in the Montgomery Ward building down on....
Q: At 393 Seventh Avenue?
A: Yeah. Something like that. I don't think it's a good move myself, because I don't like getting out of the district. I don't think that's smart.

Q: But that's not going to be for the showrooms.
A: Yeah, I think it is.

Q: The showrooms are going to be done there too?
A: Uh huh, uh huh. Everything.

Q: Well, what's the advantage of that over 498?
A: Well, because we were all over the place. We were across the street, we were up the street, we've got six different floors in 498... No continuity. And people are all over the lot. This way we'll get them all in one building. And then they'll be able to operate better. And I think it's a good idea from that point of view. I wish they'd found a building up on 38th Street or 39th Street, or something like that. But a lot of the menswear fellows are now moving back downtown, from the middle sixties... 666 Fifth Avenue....

Q: And 1290 Sixth Avenue..
A: Yeah, all of those.... around 52nd Street... But the rents are going so high they can't afford it. Now they're coming back downtown to where we're going, in that area. Because the rents are cheaper..
Q: That's very interesting. Just watching the growth of the garment industry has meant watching the movement from downtown to uptown. And now you're saying it's heading...

A: Back downtown. Yeah. Well, you remember, there was a time when the better dress houses--so-called--the Nettie Rosensteins and those people were all uptown. And they all came back downtown. That happened thirty years ago. Sure. You know who amazes me though, is Mollie Parnis. You know her don't you?

Q: Oh, very well. I'm interviewing her at 2:30 today.

A: Really? Give her my best, will you? She's a nice person. I always got along well with Mollie. A lot of people didn't but I always did. And I thought she had a good sense of humor, and was smart as hell. Well, we used to have meetings amongst all of the manufacturers...

Q: At the Fashion Originators Guild...

A: At the Fashion Originators Guild, about knockoffs. About the people who were knocking them off, and so forth. So when we were at a meeting one time, Mollie got up and made a speech about how terrible it was that people were knocking off her dresses. So all the guys in the room started to laugh like hell, because Mollie, at that time, was knocking off everybody else's dresses. See. But she wouldn't admit it. And it was really a big joke, you see. Now, Mollie went through the years, because she's smart, and kept....I don't know how ...Mollie's got to be 80 years old.

Q: I think officially she's 77...

A: Yeah? Hah, hah, hah. She was around a long time before I arrived on the scene. so anyway...I always liked Mollie, and she was smart, and I give her credit for doing...She's a last survivor, almost, of that whole group of people,
Herb Sondheim and that whole...

Q: Adele Simpson is still...
A: Adele Simpson is still around, but... I don't know why, I don't know what motivates her at this point.

Q: The daughter.
A: Is that what it is?
Q: Joan Raines. Yeah.
A: Well, that's good. But Mollie didn't have anybody with her. And all of her family are gone. They're all dead. And she's by herself. Her son, of course, but he's not in the business....

Q: Her son died...
A: He did?
Q: Yes. He died several years ago. Of cancer.
A: Oh, I didn't know that. I'm sorry. He was a piano player wasn't he?

Q: Bob Livingston? Not that I know of. He was in the theatre. He was a producer.
A: I knew he was in there someplace...
Q: But he died at the age of 40 I think...
A: Oh, boy. Gee that's tough. I didn't know that.
Q: Oh, yeah.
A: So, really, she has nobody. And I guess maybe that's why she still goes to work and does what she does, because she has nobody. I got a big kick out of that champagne ad of hers. Did you see that?
Q: Yeah.
A: I'm tryin to think what her name was before...Before they changed it to Livingston.
Q: Levinson.
A: Levinson. That's right. Lonny Levinson. I remember him. He was a silk salesman, and that's how he got to know Mollie. And he was a funny guy.
Q: That's a story I'll get this afternoon. Before this tape runs out, you have been involved in an awful lot of philanthropic activities. Would you tell me about those, because I like to hear...
A: Well, I think one of the first things I'm involved in is the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame. I'm Chairman of the Board and have been for the last 12 years. I've been in the organization since its inception-25 years ago. We've built a Hall of Fame out in Kings Island, Ohio. We have 55 chapters around the country. And we have a wonderful scholar/athlete program which I'm very proud of. We do a lot of good for the young kids of the country who are not only good football players but good students. My other big love, of course, is golf, and I play golf...Since I've started to play I've had a lot of fun with it, and have been fairly successful. Won some tournaments. For a guy that goes to business every day, this is pretty good. I never..I don't have the time to practice a lot. I just played, and did pretty well. I was the club champion here in Westchester, and won some other championships. I'm still involved in golf. I think the whole Izod concept came from my involvement with golf. I'm Chairman of the Westchester Classic and I've been that since its inception, which is also going on about 25 years. So...then...My other, academic achievement is that I've been Chairman of the Board
of Trustees at Manhattan College, until just recently. I retired. They changed the rules three times to keep me, as Chairman, which I was for 10 years, and on the Board for 16 years. I was instrumental in getting a new gymnasium built up there, which we raised the money for. I raised a lot of it. But we built a new gym, which is about a $4 million building, and it added a tremendous amount to the college life, because it needed it. It was old and obsolete. Now we've got all kinds of things going on up there, and they were very grateful that I was instrumental in getting that done. It was named in honor of my daughter, my wife and my son--it's called the Draddy gymnasium. Then my son also went to Canterbury School up in Connecticut, New Milford. I just gave them, a few years ago, a hockey rink, which they've gotten a tremendous amount of value from. Kids all play in it, the townspeople play in it. The headmaster told me it's the greatest thing that ever happened to the school. Because it adds so much to the life of the school. So I'm interested in all kinds of things. I run the Cancer Fund Golf Tournament down in Palm Beach. And I'm always working for somebody or giving money to somebody. I enjoy it. I thank God I've got the money to give'em. And I feel like when you do something good like that, you get a warm feeling inside.

Q: And you make a real contribution too.

A: Yeah. Well, let's thank God I can do it. A lot of people got money and don't do a God damned thing.

Q: You know, it is very interesting. It seems to be a characteristic of the apparel industry, regardless of who runs the businesses or which the businesses are, but here is a lot of philanthropy. A lot of philanthropic spirit.

A: I want to tell you something. I've been in the industry, as you
know, since 1934. And of all the people I've ever met in the world, they--
the Jewish people--in the dress business, are the most generous of any group
of people I have ever known. They give money they don't even have. See, if
they have to give to something, an emergency fund, then they'll give even be-
yond their ability, almost, to give. And I think...When you think of how
much money they raise in our industry, for different Jewish charities...There's
a lot of them. It's just incredible. Catholic Charities...I'm a Catholic, and
a good friend of the Cardinal's and everything, but my God, they can't raise any-
thing like the money, and I think we've got more Catholics in town than Jews.
But they outstrip them 50, 60, 100 to one maybe. I have great admiration for
their generosity. They're wonderful people. From that point of view, nobody
comes close to them. Now I'm not talking about individual....Somebody has a great
deal of money and somebody says "Well, why don't you give $10 million to Dartmouth
or Harvard," and he says "Okay." He didn't make the money. Somebody else made it.
Two or three generations back. He's just giving it away now. So I think by and
large...Of course Harvard and Yale and those places get a tremendous amount of
money, but they almost have a tremendous amount of old wealth. See, the Jewish
people are giving what you might call new money. Money that's just been made in
the last 20 years, or 50 years.

Q: Yeah, I noticed that in the story about the "Flame of Truth" award
of the Fund for Higher Education, that benefited both Manhattan College and Ben
Gurion University...So it was very interesting. Apparently it's always split...

A: They split it down the middle. Yeah. Well, that's the deal.
When you make a deal...I didn't want to do it at first. I didn't want to accept
the award because I said, "What for?" and so on and so forth. And they said, "Well, so you can have the right to say where 50% of the money goes." I'll take it, and I'll give the money to Manhattan College.

Q: I thank you. I think that was just wonderful. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about...?

A: You and I could talk for weeks.

Q: Yes, I think so.

A: There are so many things... They come through your mind. You'll think of somebody you hadn't thought of, like...some of these guys. I jotted them down at breakfast, just in case you wanted to know some of the people I used to be associated with. You know, Dave Goodstein and all these guys.

Q: Yeah. Right.

A: And it just brings sad memories, because there's none of them left. Every one of them's gone. Davidow's went broke. you know. And Kane Weil went broke... Dave Goodstein was the only guy...

Q: I'm just sorry that this was not done ten years ago.

A: Why?

Q: This oral history. Because there are so many gone now who were not... who were still here ten years ago.

A: Oh, you mean, for your point of view. Oh, sure. Yes.

Q: I can't do an oral history on somebody who isn't here, and there so many people who were here ten years ago... So, I'm just sorry. But I'm very glad to be getting the people that I am able to get.

A: I think one of the things that might be of interest to somebody
is the trip to Europe that everybody used to make.

Q: Oh, right. Yes.
A: You didn't fly in those days. You had to go by boat. And that was something else. Every night was New Year's Eve.

Q: That's probably one reason why the industry...Why people were so close to each other.
A: Sure. That's right. I went to Europe on the Normandy in 1937, and remember the guy who used to be head of Russeks?
Q: Dave Nemerov.
A: You could tell a whole bunch of stories about Dave. He was a nice guy. He was a smart cookie.
Q: Very.
A: A good stylist and everything.
Q: But I do think that was one of the sources of all the camaraderie that you talk about.
A: Well, you were on the boat for six and a half days. Every night you went...I used to be the collector for the band. You know, the band would play until 2:00, see. And then if you wanted them to play to 4:00, you had to go around and pick up a couple hundred dollars to keep them workin. So I would get to hassling the trumpet player, and go around the room and I would pick up $300-$400 every night. And we'd keep them on...
Q: Thank you very much, Vin.
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