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THE FASHION INDUSTRY LEADERS

PAUL HONIG

ANGLO FABRICS, INC.

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Interviewed by

Mildred Finger
Anglo Fabrics was founded in this country in 1941 by Leo and Paul Honig, who migrated here from Austria. The family had been in the textile business for generations.

Anglo Fabrics (so named because their original inventory was acquired in England) has always specialized in high fashion fabrics. This was a marketing decision reached by Paul Honig who believed that this specialty would help create a niche in an industry where many large and highly successful woollen firms already existed.

In this Oral History, Paul Honig describes the way a totally entrepreneurial business was born, evolved, and has flourished in an industry where failures have been numerous.
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Q. Paul, I'd like to have you start by really going back to the beginnings; where were you born? When were you born?

A. I will try to give you, in as short as possible way, the background, but basically you are interested in the story of my start in the United States. I...

Q. I'm also...

A. ...I came, my family comes from Austria, they were in the textile business in Austria. I, as a child...

Q. When were you born Paul?

A. ...1905. As a child I went to the finest textile college in the world in Brun, in Czechoslovakia and graduated, actually not in Brun, because the last year I preferred to graduate in Austria that also had a textile college. After graduation of the textile college I didn't want to go home...

Q. What was its name? Do you remember that, remember the name of the textile college in Austria that you finished in?

A. In Textile Shule.


A. Shule, that's...

Q. I know how to spell it.

A. So when I finished and graduated...

Q. At what age?

A. Very young, eighteen, nineteen. I did not want to go home and I looked for a job and I found a job in Sudeten, Germany, which
is better known to you as part and parcel of Czechoslovakia. I came to a mill that was highly regarded but had very little use for fellows of my race and surprisingly I got the job as an assistant designer to a very old man that was in it. After I worked there for about a year, the old man retired. They didn't hire anybody; they asked me whether I could undertake the job of styling a line for them; which was no problem and I started the line and it was very successful line, whether it was due to my work or whether it was due to the economics in the country at that time, but the line that I created for them was very, very enthusiastically accepted and, as I mentioned to you before, the people were like kings in their business. They did not even call me in to tell me how happy and satisfied they are and give me an increase in salary, nothing at all, so I made up my mind that I would leave them. And when I came to the principal and I told him that I am leaving, he said why, aren't you happy? So I said, I am very happy but I am unhappy with you. You don't realize that I have to make a living. I am not going to stay here and get help from home in order to be able to work for you. I left and I took another job and worked as a designer for about a half a year for a very, very large concern and then my brother, who was about ten years older than I, was running the textile business in Vienna with merchandise produced in various mills in Austria. He wanted me to come back and I was very happy.
to go back at that particular stage of the game. I also had an advantage. I, before taking on a job I wanted to know about tailoring and...

Well, I came home and I was confronted with a very unpleasant economic situation, generally in Europe, and the best way to protect yourself was to go and close the circle. That means, not only making fabrics or selling fabrics or designing fabrics but going into the ready-to-wear business, and that we did. Not only in the women's wear, children's wear, but also in the menswear and boyswear in Austria which was a very small country and the need for export was tremendous which we then...

Q. About what year was this?
A. I am talking now to you of the early, late twenties, early, early, thirties. I would say twenty-nine, thirty-two, thirty-three, nineteen..., no, no, before Hitler. It must have been in, I would say nineteen twenty-five to nineteen hundred and thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two. So we did quite a bit of...

Q. How..., excuse me, how did you go into the business? Did you hire designers?
A. We hired people. We had a separate business that had it's own name in the women's wear end of it: that means women's wear: coats, suits, dresses and so. No, not the dresses, only coats and suits; dresses was a separate business and the menswear business was a separate business as well. It was different names, I don't want to
mention them, but it was a set up that closed the circle. In other words we were in the ready-to-wear business all the way through using our fabrics in the manufacture of the various things.

Q. But you also sold your fabrics to other people?

A. Of course. We sold our fabrics to manufacturers that existed. We tried to keep the fabrics that we used for manufacturing in such a way that the others are not affected by it so we didn't show it on the lines.

Q. In other words you tried to maintain exclusivity?

A. Exclusivity. At this time, at that stage, I used to visit, of course, the various markets in Europe but especially in Paris, which was the heart of it and there I met a lot of people from America that later on became very important to me.

Q. So you started going to Paris at a very early point?

A. Oh yes, in the late twenties.

Q. In the late twenties.

A. Twenties. And...

Q. Had you, incidentally, gone to have any special schooling yourself in ready-to-wear manufacture or a...?

A. Only taste.

Q. Only taste. Okay.

A. I needed technicians.

Q. Right.
A. And I picked good ones. I thought so and then it proved I picked good ones. But it was an exciting business because it was a business that if somebody is ambitious he could strive and we sold all over the world practically because we also sold to America to some manufacturers. They wanted it. It was better for them to buy garments that they liked from us then pay ten times the amount of money and buy it in Paris.

Q. So you sold models?
A. I wouldn't call, they picked garments that they liked for America. We couldn't judge it.

Q. But I mean to say, they didn't buy stock from you; they bought individual pieces?
A. They didn't buy stock. They only bought pieces for reproduction.

Q. Right.
A. People like Haft, Monarch Garment, and others. We are very...

Q. So you brought a collection with you to Paris?
A. Nope. They came to Vienna.

Q. They came to you.
A. Well, our business was considered as one of the leading businesses in this field in Austria.

Q. You're talking about the textile business?
A. Everything. The whole set up.

Q. Everything. Was there one name for the whole business?
A. No. The textile business had one name...
Q. What was its name as a textile company?
A. The Alfred Epstein....
Q. Alfred?
A. Epstein.
Q. Epstein.
A. Alright. Shein & Company was the women's coat and suit business. The Rothmuller Laufer and Company was the men's business.
Q. Could you spell that?
A. Rothmuller?
Q. R....?
A. R O T H M U double L, E R, Rothmuller. Alright. So, the businesses were split up to give us the biggest possible effect in our center place, supplying them with fabrications. The situation in Europe started to get a little bit unpleasant for a Jewish organization and I was very much concerned as was my brother, and so were others. And I'm talking now to you about the putsch 1936 where Hitler became the big man.... At that time we started all to look for safer ports and I visited on the recommendation from Mr. Morris Haft, may he rest in peace, who wanted to help me in every way. I came to the United States.
Q. How long had your firm been in the textile business in Europe?
A. I would say about eighty years.
Q. Eighty?
A. Yes.
Q. And was it always a family business?
A. It always was.

Q. So it was from one generation to another?

A. One to the other, yes. I came to the United States and I was not too happy what I saw then. I ran away because of the Nazis in Europe who took the Jews as their target and I came to America and I saw signs, no Jews permitted, so on, and I didn't like that too much. Anyhow, I made this trip a couple of times on the recommendation of another very dear friend of mine that passed away, that was Philip Mangone, a very, very fine manufacturer and who said, under no circumstances do you stay there, you come here. But family and so on, it was not easy. Anyhow when the Germans marched into Austria, I had only one obsession which was to get my brother, his wife, the three children, and my sister who was in Hungary living there (unfortunately I lost her). I got my brother with the family out and I still stayed on in Vienna having very tight connections with top Nazis, Austrian Nazis. Anyhow, when they took away the business from us, I made a deal with a fellow who had a big business in Austria. His partner was a Swiss fellow, so I tried to tell him I give you this order when I am in Switzerland and you'll get some money there. From then on we got together, my family, my brother and his family, myself and we went to Paris. From Paris...

Q. I'm sorry, where was your brother at this point? You said you got...
A. He was in Yugoslavia.

Q. In Yugoslavia?

A. Yes, I, we got them out there, then we met in Switzerland and from Switzerland we went to Paris. We tried to collect ourselves as much as we have been able, and my brother succeeded in sending his wife and the three children to the United States. They left on the Queen Mary and we had some friends here for them to contact. We tried to follow as quickly as possible as soon as we got our immigration visas. In the meantime we changed our address from Paris to London; my closest friend was the Ellis and Goldstein Corporation which is, today, one of the largest coat and suit manufacturers. At that they made dresses as well. Today they not only manufacture and sell coats and suits, they have stores too. They wanted me, very badly, to stay with them. One of the sons of Goldstein's was a dear friend of mine. So I said, there is nothing that can keep me in Europe, not all the money in the world. As soon as I have my immigration visa, I will go. When I was called and I got the immigration visa, my brother had still to wait. In the meantime we put all the monies that we saved and we smuggled and risked, we couldn't transfer the money from England, the only thing we could transfer was piece goods.

Q. Why, were there restrictions on...?

A. Yes, I couldn't transfer gold, America wouldn't take it.

Q. I see, I see.
A. And the English were very adamant. We had big friends, big mills as we knew the textile business, we got into big mills with the help of the Ellis & Goldstein people who also were getting a little bit scared of the Nazis coming too close to them. So, together we must have bought about five thousand pieces of various goods that we send to the free ports in the United States.

Q. A piece of goods in those days was about how many yards?
A. Oh, seventy yards.

Q. 70?
A. Yes. Now, when I got my visa, I said to my brother, I am going ahead, I am going to try to establish ourselves in the United States. I had good recommendations from the Swiss banks and so on because everything had to be done so that nobody that lived under the Nazis could be affected by what we did; and with recommendations from Swiss friends we contacted a firm by the name of William Iselin which was....

Q. I S E L I N ?
A. Yes. They are factors and they behaved to us fantastically. They gave me on one of their floors in the building on Fourth Avenue and Twenty Sixth Street, practically half a floor to set myself up. My brother in the mean time came in too and we were.... We knew that the war has to break out any day, right? The people here slept. I wanted to transfer some money. I'm not going to mention, in this case, any names; we knew in America, navy serge
was the big fabric in mens wear. Whenever you saw in Europe a man wearing a navy suit, a navy coat, brimless glasses, that was an American. So I was recommended to one of the large men's clothing firms. I had five hundred pieces of navy serge, twills that I actually got from friends in England, from mills, for almost nothing. It cost me about two dollars and seventy five cents a yard, and I had it in free port and I wanted some money. So I went to this large men's clothing manufacturer and I showed him the goods. He liked the goods, and asked how much do you want? So I said, I don't want, I want to exchange my money. I invested in it two dollars and seventy five; I want two seventy five. He says, I can't use your goods; they are too narrow for American, your goods is fifty-five, fifty-six inches, we only buy fifty-eight, but I will help you. If you want, I will give you two dollars; at which case I got excited and I said, mister, thank you very much for your offer but I will tell you something. Those are five hundred pieces of goods, I will keep them for you; you will come to me to ask for it; you will have to say please and I will charge you six and a half dollars a yard and you will be glad to have it. Good-bye. And I left. Now things started to pop in the United States....

Q. This is still before the war in Europe?

A. Still before the war in Europe. You have the Nazis, yes, the blitz was already on, alright? In Europe. Japan was, there was no talk....
Q. So this was in the late thirties?

A. That's in the late thirties. The man had a good memory, he was on Fifth Avenue, three blocks or four blocks away, he came up with his piece goods man and he says to me, do you have the serges? So I say, yes sir, I keep my word. I promised you the five hundred pieces. He says, I'll take them. He says, three dollars, two ninety-five you ask? So I said, well, you have a bad memory mister; you have a good memory, it's six and a half dollars a yard. To cut the story short, he took them for six and a half dollars. I could have sold it for eight and a half dollars. Anyhow...

Q. But we were still not at war?

A. No war, it was just be... maybe, that was the vacuum before Pearl Harbor, alright? The people here slept. They didn't know what's going on. Well, at the same time I was offered by one of the largest woolen organizations in the United States a job as a designer, (this is even before my brother came). I turned the man down because I wouldn't take any jobs even though the salary that he offered was astronomical. However, I made him a proposition that I would style a line in any one of the mills that he wants, with the understanding that any fabric that I would like to take out of it, would be confined to me. He agreed with that. We wanted to organize our business so the Iselin people that helped us became our factors. Because of the tremendous amount of English goods that we had, the name of Anglo Fabrics came into existence.
Q. Paul, could we go back just a minute. From your recollection of those days, who were the principal makers of wool? Who were then in this market?

A. Oh my God. I could list you as many as I remember; American Woolen Company, they were the largest woolen conglomerate in the world. Forstmann, Weindot, before Weindot existed....

Q. How do you spell Weindot?

A. Weindot, W, but it's not, I made a mistake, it's not. It's Forstmann, J.P. Stevens, in where they are? In New Jersey, there were dozens of mills they did....

Q. Warumbo?

A. Warumbo and Stroock and, next to Forstmann was, one of the....

Q. Hockanum?

A. Hockanum. There, a whole conglomerate of mills....

Q. Julliard?

A. Julliard. A whole conglom... I would have to take out a list to read to you.

Q. So that the woolen industry was a big one in this country?

A. A tremendous industry. It was a very serious undertaking on our part, my brothers and mine, because the people said we have no Chinaman's chance to survive. Well we had this arrangement with one of these mills that we can pick up these confined articles for what I did. They didn't live up to it, not that the man himself said anything but the salesmen when they went
into somebody who bought, they make it. Alright. So that forced our hand and we really thought very seriously about a situation where a mill such as ours has a tremendous chance. So we leased a mill that was known as Haas Brothers which was the finest mill in America before Forstmann. And they had a mill in North Oxford, Massachusetts that we leased from one of the Haas fellows. This mill was run down and we started to clean up and prepare it and so on, and we had big help from raw wool dealers in Boston that knew us. They wanted to give us whatever there is in raw wool material and they did at very cheap prices. They wanted to help us. We leased another mill on the border of Massachusetts and Connecticut, putting us in a position to produce about seven thousand to eight thousand yards a week. And we start styling and preparing and cleaning up, my brother and I, and we made a line of tweeds, shetland type of tweeds that were not in the market; and we had the help of the late John Frumkes and Morris Haft who really were the kings of the ladies garment business. When John sent me to somebody (I will mention one, Fierman and Kolmer) and he called me up and said I want you to give my friend an order for five hundred pieces, he gave me five hundred pieces. Morris Haft and others. John Frumkes, over the telephone, created sales for me I never dreamt of. We became very close friends. He knew me from Vienna. He came with his wife to Vienna from Paris and....

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So, this is the way we started. Alright? So, no sooner I was ready one day just about, I would say, a couple of weeks before Pearl Harbor, a little gentleman, very stout little fellow with typical American uniform, navy, unrimmed glasses, came up, he wants to talk to me. He introduces himself, his name is Simon Cohen. So, I say, pleased to meet you, what can I do, he said: I want to see what you are making. So I showed him what I am making and he picked two items and gave me an order for one thousand pieces. I nearly fell on the floor. And he signed the order and then gave me a very long delivery date. I told him I can't do the finishing; my finishing department is too small, so he made arrangements with Botany, that's one of the large mills in New Jersey to finish for me on commission. Then, as he said goodbye, he says, if your credit man gives you any problems, let him call me. Well, I came to my brother with the order for a thousand pieces of goods. He says, I knew it couldn't be, doesn't exist, a man buying a thousand pieces of goods. Anyhow, it took about eight days; the order was okay and we became very good friends with Simon Cohen. Their firm's name was Junior Deb.

Q. About how much, what was the price in those days, about?
A. Well, three dollars, three and a quarter and it comes to the story that it is unique for American psychology. O.P.A. came into existence; we were forced to submit all our fabrics to pricing of O.P.A. As we were completely new, we had to have somebody
as our competitor by whom to guide ourselves so we took, we picked Forstman. So the fabric that I sold for two ninety seven and a half became four and a quarter. No sooner that happens then Mr. Simon Cohen...

Q. Excuse me, would you explain that, what you mean that something that you had...

A. The law said that if you haven't been in business prior to this, your base calculation is based on your nearest competitor so, that's how I picked Forstman. Mr. Simon Cohen came up to me, well, I can say that be..., he's dead, may he rest in peace, and he says to me, there is a tremendous shortage in piece goods, people they are running like crazy to get pieces. The mills gave them allotments, five pieces, ten pieces, twenty pieces, you couldn't buy it for any kind of money. We paid the price where control is. Mr. Simon Cohen came up to me with a nice smile, hello Paul, how are your he says, I want to know what your O.P.A. price is. So I said, Mr. Cohen, you don't need to worry we are going to deliver at the prices which we sold you. He says, you don't understand, I want your O.P.A. price, and I refused. So he says, you dumb refugee, don't you read what that law says? You can, you have an O.P.A. price, you're entitled to sell it to me at the O.P.A. price and I, according to this price, have also to create an O.P.A. price. At the price that you want to deliver
it to me, I don't make a penny. At the four and a quarter, I make money so you don't have a bad feeling. I don't want anything from you, just tear up this order, write it instead for four and a quarter. Typical American. Well, of course, we had a tremendous, tremendous wait. I told you that the name Anglo fabrics derived from the tremendous amount of goods that we had. Prior to the O.P.A. we started to sell to lots of manufacturers. We had Harris tweeds; there was a fellow by the name of A. Davis who was the king in Harris tweeds, I sold him all the Harris tweeds that I had... Most of these people were very, very nice to us; we made very good friends. Naturally, we realized that we had no chance with those giants of textile mills around us unless we could create a fashionable type of fabric. I started to go to Europe, I knew...

Q. This is now after the war?

A. That is after the war. ...Started to go to Europe, it became an impossible situation. We, at that particular time, already had leased property in Webster, Massachusetts and so we gave up the Haas Rube Mill as they were called and moved everything into our own building in Webster, Massachusetts. Incidentally, Webster, Massachusetts had a tremendous mill that was an American Woolen company mill, that made menswear fabrications in Webster, but basically it was a shoe factory oriented part of the country. We followed the idea of high fashion fabrics. We certainly were
not competitive, so we had to produce something that is singular.

Q. Why weren't you competitive? What do you mean?

A. I didn't have the tremendous amount of tools at my disposal that those giants had. Fortunately, those giants didn't bother with high fashion merchandise; they were not going to make six pieces or eight pieces of goods for a manufacturer, or ten or twelve or twenty. They wanted a hundred, two hundred, so on. We were oriented, we would take an order for eight pieces of goods and we would make it.

Q. How many styles would you make for a given, any given collection?

A. Hundred. Various fabrics. And today, if you come to Anglo Fabrics, you have to spend a couple of hours to see our line.

Well, I knew Europe, of course, very well and I was very aggravated by the fact that when the American manufacturers went to Paris, to Italy, to Spain, you know, I don't need to tell you...

Q. Tell me anyway.

A. If they bought something, they bought yardage to make garments, they came and gave me a sample copy of it. Everybody saw, it was technically practically not possible to copy all the variations that they wanted and I really was very aggravated and I figured out a way to satisfy my American friends without becoming a stylist in fabrications. I created, unbeknown to anybody, a firm in Paris. I took an Italian couple and made them partners in it, and started to make fabrics in America and sent half of...
those that I made to Paris. At that time, I hired two French salesmen because Paris is organized so no outsider can get in. I hired those two Frenchmen and they placed cuts from Balenciaga down. Where the Europeans used to show dark shades, (navy, black, brown, green) here I came with pink and blue and orange and you name it, bright lively colors and the firm became known under the name of Nattier and I'm sure that you yourself will remember. Now, nobody knew that I am behind it. I registered the firm; I financed it and they bought dress fabric....

Q. What, about what year was this?

A. Well, I would say that was in the late fifties, early sixties and naturally, I didn't sit in the business which I opened in the Rue de Rivoli. That's in the heart of Paris and I got very frightened. What would happen to me when my customers came to me with my own samples to see whether I could copy them? Now, you have to realize that, to give you an idea, I take a fabric like a double woven velour in which, at that time, Christian Dior made these short coats, like waistcoats in all these gorgeous colors. We sold the fabric priced here in America, I think at that time at $7.95. We must have sold it to Nattier for seven dollars. You add the duty and everything, they sold it for eighteen dollars which landed twenty-six, twenty-seven dollars a yard.
Q. Back here you mean?

A. Back in the United States. Now, you have to realize the position I found myself in; if this becomes public knowledge, I am making fools out of my customers. So I was very, very careful. The first fellow that came back was my late friend... Mr. Zuckerman, Ben Zuckerman. He sent me a sample, a small sample of my fabric and he wanted to know whether I could make it, so I said, I have a fabric very, very close to it. I sent him a lot of colors. He picked three shades; I send those orders through. He calls me up and he told me in Jewish, he says, goniff (that means thief) the colors you copied perfectly but the quality of your fabric is not the same. I pay you more money, make it. I said, Mr. Zuckerman, you have to send me a larger sample. So he sent me a larger sample and I fooled around with him and I said, I can't make it. Why don't you, I sent you a cut of mine, make it up and compare. Alright. He finally used a lot of it. He never knew because that was the first time that I did this. Others followed, the big shots of the industry came in running for copy and so on. I never repeated that. I am very happy to tell you that every time that I came to Palm Beach, Ben Zuckerman who became a very dear friend of mine with Harry Schacter, I couldn't run... I had to tell him the story. So, one day we have lunch together, I said, Ben, if you promise me that this won't disturb our friendship, I want to tell you a story in which
you were a main actor; and I told him the story. The man had tears were running down his cheeks when I told him the story. So Anglo Fabrics in its early years was directed in the direction of the making of the type of fabrics that a) We could produce with the tools that we had. b) That we could accept small orders. c) That we could confine various fabrics all over the lot. d) Protect the people not to release our fabric to cheaper manufacturers. And that was the start, the beginning of it. Of course, we modernized our mills. We...

Q. Before you talk about the modernization of the mills... In the days when you started Nattier, did you have separate design staff on Nattier or did you send the designs to...

A. I designed it here in...

Q. You designed it here.

A. It was here and I sent them to, if I dyed out eight pieces per shade, I sent them four and I kept four.

Q. Well now, just to be more explicit... When you say you designed them, you obviously couldn't stand yourself every day and do designs. You styled them and had to sell...

A. We styled them here, we had people...

Q. ...And you had a staff of sketchers and so...

A. ...in our organization. Yes, yes, yes. And, there was no question, I mean, that was in my blood. I knew the fashion business; I knew the fabric business. There was no big problem.
Unfortunately, the success of this Nattier business was so tremendous that it went to the heads of those two Italian friends to an extent that I didn't want to be part and parcel of it and I stepped out of it completely, fortunately, before they collapsed.

Q. How did you, incidentally, how did you and your brother divide the functions of your business? Was he the administrator...?

A. My brother was the administrator of the business. He bought the raw wool. He was responsible for the financial end of the business. I was styling, selling and did all the...

Q. Promoting.

A. ...The glamour, I wanted to say, that goes with it. In due time I became quite well known in the trade because the people met me here, met me there. Everybody was surprised that we survived because what happened in America is that one textile mill after the other closed. Well, I do not want you to think for one moment that I am trying to glamorize myself.

Q. No, no.

A. One man in his life could never achieve it. Not only was the team, my brother and I, of tremendous importance, but also the team that we hired for our mill. One of our closest friends who was a mill man in Czechoslovakia, who became the superintendent in the mill, is a man by the name of Walter Seidel...

Q. How do you spe...?, Seidel? Z...?
A. S E I D E L. Who still is with us and he is a friend and he
runs the mill, but right now it became a family organization.
I will explain what our set up is. In the mill, as I told you,
I have Mr. Seidel who is the head of the mill. I have my old-
est nephew, the oldest son of my brother, John Honig, who is
the right hand with all the stuff that we have. That is, was
the making. Today, of course, we have Steve Honig, who is the
youngest son of Leo Honig. His three boys are in the mill, so
I have three grandnephews in the mill, alright? And it's a mod-
eral mill; we are not out just for the money's sake; we had ambi-
tions to establish ourselves as a sound organization and hopefully,
I can say I succeeded. You go from one difficult time into another
and you have always to be on top of it. If you give in, you are
out. Now, I want to tell you something else which will interest
you to a great degree. Very close friends of ours in Austria,
in Vienna, was a family by the name of Goldman. They were run-
ing one of the largest farms around Vienna. Unfortunately, when
Hitler came in, this was all broken up. The man was imprisoned
and the wife with the two little boys... I tried and I got him
out. I got her out and I finally got him out, and we bought a
farm in New Jersey. We were scared; we didn't think of ourselves
as geniuses. We thought of ourselves as hard working people where
eighteen hours didn't mean a thing. Sixteen hours, eighteen hours,
Saturday, Sunday, didn't mean a thing. So we were scared because
we didn't come here empty handed we, whatever we saved, we bought
for instance, we translated into money. We wanted to have a safety valve. Having Mr. Goldman here (although he was not too well with a slight heart condition) and his two boys and his wife, we bought a farm in Pennington, New Jersey. The reason for it, Pennington, New Jersey, because it had two buildings in which we could put in furniture, both build... And, and the house that we rented here in Kew Gardens, and then we had our lift vans left so the first reaction was that we make out of it chicken coops to create a chicken farm. Now this farm was a dairy farm, with about if I remember correctly seventy five cows and the Goldmans went in it to work there...

End Tape 1; Side 1
...We felt safe. Alright? And, as the war came to an end and there were reparations given, we got our buildings back in Austria. Of course, anything that wasn't nailed down, we couldn't get. Some reparations we still get, dribs and drabs, but every bit of money that we got out of Austria, we put into land. We bought land. All around Pennington, we bought land; then when the war broke out, the owner of a large dairy farm in Flemington, New Jersey, a German living there with his sister, died. She couldn't run it; she advertised the farm and she couldn't sell it for no money, so we decided we would take it over. It was a barn with four hundred cows, and we took that over. The sister was an old lady, we wanted her to stay on; she did, for quite a time. Out of this dairy farm, that we ran together with the Goldmans (or should I say, the Goldmans, together with us because they are there, there are two Goldman boys there, there is one son-in-law of Leonard Siegel there) known as Pennington Dairy Farm is one of the largest farms on the Eastern seaboard. We supply people in New Jersey, in Pennsylvania, in Maryland, in Washington. We are considered the largest dairy, privately owned dairy farmers in New Jersey.

Q. I read somewhere that the volume is about sixty million.
A. Oh, it's much more than that.
Q. It's much more than that. I guess that was nineteen seventy six.
A. It's more than double.
Q. More than double. And how does...
A. It's triple.
Q. Triple. How does that compare with Anglo?
A. We are nothing, a little nothing.
Q. A little nothing.
A. Anglo if, no, I shouldn't say that, I shouldn't minimize. Anglo fabrics is a very well organized and set organization with people that have safe jobs with us, that we don't move around people that are with us from the beginning until, right now, by the end of last year one of our people retired and went to Miami, he was with us thirty-five years and we are a very conservative organization. We don't play around with people. People like to work for us because we don't bother them and they don't bother us. They attend to their job. They have...
Q. How is it structured today and what other kinds of company's...?
A. I will give it to you. Now, in the past years we also organized a, what I call, over the counter business, retail business in fabrics and we hired an outstanding fellow that runs this department covering from coast to coast the trade with better fabrics yard goods for home sewing. Now, today the structure of the business is as follows: My brother is the Chairman of the Board and basically he only observes what's going on; he comes in in the morning, my nephew brings him in, who lives
near him and he looks through the mail, observes them and by eleven o'clock he goes back home. He is no youngster, he is eighty-seven years old. I am, for all purposes, the figure head, the President of the organization but I don't make any use of it because I want my nephews and grandnephews to have the responsibility. The fellow who took over the type of work that I was doing is my nephew Leonard Siegel who married the daughter of Leo Honig. He is responsible now for all the work that I used to do. It has to do with fash..., with styling the lines and with promotion and advertising and selling, a head of selling and so on. And he worked with me all the time so he is doing an excellent job. My youngest nephew, Steve Honig, took over his father's job. He is the administrator, alright? Those are the first generation. Now I will go to the third. Leonard's son is head of sales. He is not only running the sales here in New York, but also he goes every year to California. I established a very good business in California. They do a very good job and all the people in Anglo Fabrics feel like it's a family business. They feel part of the family, whoever it is. As far as the two of us are concerned, Leo and I, we are looking on, if we feel that they are going in the wrong direction, we try to tell them. If they accept it, it is okay but we do not interfere. The Anglo Fabrics organization is in the hand of young people.
Q. How many people are in the New York organization? The sales room, I mean? And so on....
A. With the salesmen?
Q. Uh, huh.
A. I would say about thirty.
Q. Thirty. And your mills are still....
A. In the mill, oh, we have, in the mill we have a few hundred; four or five hundred. They are all ambitious, alright? There's no question about it and that is what makes it so nice especially for me. I'm very, very satisfied, I see how ambitious they are. Leonard goes every year to Europe to see, to hear, to learn, to absorb, to adjust himself to it. He is a highly intelligent fellow who comes from a textile family, incidentally, he, his mother was a Naitove and after her husband died and she remarried, she moved to Texas so Leonard grew up in Texas. Steve, John, they are all textile graduates.
Q. Of textile schools?
A. Yes, they all went to textile colleges and they are all in it. Naturally, you have to know one thing. You can try to emulate somebody but you can't transform your thinking. As long as they accept because if they don't want to accept, we wouldn't object. They do object. Leonard would sit down, come into me and talk to me, what do you think about this and what do you think about that? And, I give you a very interesting happening, what we do.
Oh, about two years ago, I was approached by the Wool Council to go into an item which is very expensive, which has the fineness of cashmere and which is an extra fine merino wool. Very expensive, nothing cheap about it. The Europeans, when you went to Europe and you looked, used to spin it very fine and made six, seven ounce worsted type of dress or shawls or whatever you want. I, when they approach me and they wanted to practically give me the materials for trials, I said, oh no, no. I know what I want to do. So I styled together with my man a line of extra fine merino. Well, this is now, I'm talking to you two years later, we must have made thirty, forty thousand yards of extra fine merino, more, much more than that. Alright? And are promoting it and are doing a very good job. We are still a fashion oriented mill. If any of the top designers want us to make something for them, we never turn them down unless it is for us, technically impossible to do. So, that is Anglo Fabrics and its makeup and...

Q. Has there ever been any thought of the company becoming a public company?

A. Yes, we were approached several times but it's a family organization.

Q. And you're going to keep it that way?

A. And it...

Q. As things stand now?
A. I went, when such an offer was made to me I would call the boys together and I would say, how, what do you think? And their answer is, no. I certainly am not interested. And if they stay the way they are, they have a niche in the field. We are not small, we are not big. We don't try to, to outgrow and go and be forced to do things we don't. We like to, we feel that the size that we are now is sufficient. We can live very nicely with it.

Q. Paul, in terms of the financing of your business, when you first started it, you've explained the financing of that, is it not usual in the textile industry that people are factored or work with...?

A. Yes, we, we have been factored from the very first day.

Q. You have?

A. Yes. William Iselin.

Q. Oh, right, yes, of course, they are...

A. Factor. But today we are too large and our business has grown so we couldn't live with one factor alone so we have William Iselin, who is our grandfather, father, whatever you want, they guided us all the way through and as long as there is a William Iselin, so long Anglo Fabrics will be with them. The next factor that we have is William Heller. We need two; one factor wouldn't want to handle us because we grew too strong for them to undertake so much so they know about each other, we don't tell one
for the other. What I only mentioned slightly to you is the creation of an over the counter department of Anglo Fabrics. Now the over the counter department of Anglo Fabrics is doing ten to fifteen percent of the total turn over which is big. It is around still by demand that started with us. I don't know but I would venture to say that we have at least a thousand accounts across the country.

Q. But when you fou..., when you are factored in, I, I have been reading about the days when interest rates were six percent and your factor might be an additional three..., A. Eighteen percent.

Q. But what happens today? What kind of position does this put the industry into?

A. Well, if somebody needs the bank or the factor, whatever he wants, he'd have to pay the interest whatever it is. And the fellow that is in a position not to use the factor for any strong degree that might affect his business, avoided it. Naturally, the factors that are with you have your interest at heart. They are as hit by the tremendous interest rates that we are as the industry was. We are in a fortunate position. As I told you, we have been able to get some monies out of Europe and we have not gambled with it. We have it in the business. We don't owe anybody anything.

Q. So you have not had to resort to the use of outside financing?
A. We count on, we, no, not to the degree that it would have any effect on my business; but if I did need some money and I didn't have it, I would get the best possible rate from the factor.

Q. Alright. Now, let's, could you talk a little bit about what happened when the man-made fibers began to come into the industry?

A. That's a very interesting question that you ask me and I am going to recall. I was approached by one of the largest German concerns to go into Trevira...

Q. Hoechst?

A. Hoechst. Near Frankfurt. And they really, they sold me a bill of goods and I told them, at the time, Anglo Fabrics wouldn't make any...

Q. About what year are we talking about?

A. I would say we are talking late sixties, end of the sixties.

I said, under the name of Anglo Fabrics, I wouldn't make any synthetic fiber blends but I have a mill located on the French River. Under the French River mills, I will undertake to style a line...

Q. I'm sorry. What's French River?

A. Next to our mill is a river, it's called the French, the name is French River.

Q. Oh.

A. I said under one condition. At that time I had in mind to make
cheaper fabrics. We grew, our production grew tremendously, so I wanted to have a safety valve for having a smooth production. So I had an idea about French River Mills. We established the name, registered the name. Under that name I would sell to the lower price trade because Anglo Fabrics was in no position to sell Mr. Zuckerman and sell somebody who sells for half the price of Zuckerman. So, we had registered this French River Mills, so I said to the Hoechst people in Frankfurt, I was invited there; that started at the time when they started with Frankfurt shows, alright, so that's the year.

Q. Uh, huh.

A. They invited me to see them. I know what giants they are, and I said, well if you are willing to spend a million dollars advertising, I will deliver to you every or any designer that you want. Whether it's Zuckerman, whether it's Originala, anyone I will deliver, they will style your line..., but they won't manufacture it. You will have to give it the same way. I will not manufacture that Trevira. You can take my fabric and give it, but I will not style it. I never thought that they would accept it. They accepted it and we started... I can show you all the advertising that we have on that. We styled a line of synthetic blended fabrics, Trevira.

Q. Uh, huh.

A. And, I don't need to tell you, that it's the synthetic fiber today
too in the garment industry.

Q. Sure, I'm not really sure I understand the process. You styled it for them? You produced it?

A. I styled, I produced, I, I, only what I need for styling.

Q. Small quantities.

A. Yes, a piece or two, whatever it is.

Q. And then it was...

A. ... They can give it to ...

Q. They paid you for the styling that you ...

A. They didn't pay me for the styling. I didn't ask. I was interested in experimenting. The only thing that they gave me which was the payment that I got, is that within a season French River Mills became known.

Q. I see, okay.

A. Alright? That was my interest, eventually I gave it up anyhow. But we did a fabulous styling job in Trevira. We placed it with every top name designer that you can mention and Trevira today is a very important fabric blend. We, incidentally, have no blended fabrics.

Q. None?

A. None whatsoever. Oh, I shouldn't say that. In some cases I might need two or three percent or four percent or five percent for whatever reason, to strengthen or ..., it has no meaning within the Labelling Act, but we do not make any synthetic blends.
Q. But, how do you feel, what happened to the shape of the industry in general when the blends and the ...?

A. Well, that's a, that's a very sad, sad question to ask because it's a sad answer that I can give you. At the year when I came to the United States the largest giants in the textile field were in America, not only in the woolen end of it. Today, well after I quickly run over a half a dozen names, that's it.

Q. Who are the half dozen names that you think still ...?

A. Well, you have Burlington, J.P. Stevens and ...

Q. Milliken?

A. Milliken, definitely, a half a dozen, I mean there are, that are in it for ...

Q. But most of them are not in pure fibers or pure fabrics?

A. They are not in pure, pure fibers at all but they are much more, many of them that are in the furniture fabric business. You have still; I, I don't recall the names but they are giants in it. But in the woolen business, the top organization of this country is J.P. Stevens.

Q. Uh, huh.

A. If you say woolen and worsted business, you have, there, Burlington. Deering Milliken, whom I respect as an organization, enormously, has its own position in the market for whatever they do and they are, they maintain in a large scale the same policy that we maintain in Anglo Fabrics. This is what we do, this is what we
understand how to do, we don't want anything else.

Q. Do you think that conditions in the world, being what they are, that the woolen business would have diminished regardless of happenings or ...?

A. It, the situation of the woolen business world wise, if you want to talk, is, whether it is England, France, Italy or Germany, the textile business is, what do you call? Decimated, half or, or a lot of them liquidated, closed up but definitely the textile business is in a very bad and poor shape. It's worldwide, it is no much difference in the United States. Well, I have, I have always had and I still have objections to the methods of operation taking shape here in America and the Europeans, from what I have seen in the last couple of years, are trying to emulate them. The stores in the United States, for instance, you don't see any advertising done that the store would say with pride, this is an American fabric whether it is Anglo Fabric or anybody else. You have a situation worldwide today that everybody is trying to come into the United States to sell. Fine. The result of it was the, let's say, the ruination of fantastic mills in the United States that are non-existing that are only a memory. Alright? But you have the same situation in France. You have the same situation in England. You have the same situation in Germany and in Italy and we can only hope that we can survive. But there is no question in my mind that the policy is; I predict the same thing is going
to happen to the fashion business, ready-to-wear business, what happened to the automobiles. America thought that they are it. The American automobile is it; there is no other, they, they were ruling the world. And it's true, they were. But somehow or other, they closed, they closed their eyes and ears and they missed the boat and you have a catastrophic situation in the automobile industry in the United States. We have unemployment up to the gills. Now in the textile industry you have the same situation. In order for us to do business as a country, we have to let them sell to us. If you would take statistics of merchandise; how and where it is produced and how it is coming in here and in what quantity it is coming in here, your hair would stand up. So, how can I wake up a retailer to tell him, why don't you protect yourself you are losing, if you are losing workers or earners in the United States, you are losing consumers. If a woman does not make money and her husband doesn't make any money, she is not going to come into you to buy merchandise but ... I was told sour grapes.

Q. Are you suggesting that ..., I'm sorry. Are you suggesting that much of the increase in import - both the fabrics and of apparel, are you taking into consideration the price differences, do you think that the ...?

A. Everything, everything, alright? I give you an idea. I, I was work ... My brother used to write letters to Washington, it doesn't mean a thing. I went, and I won't mention the country, I went to...
Europe and I took a line of fabrications with me and I went into a big organization and they gave me an order for a hundred pieces of goods, in Germany. I'm talking years back and the purchaser says its subject to me being able to get a okay from the department that I can import these goods. So, I said, okay, he will let me know. So he did let me know, he says, the answer was we have sufficient of this type of merchandise making in our country, we don't need to ...

Q. In Germany?
A. Yes, we don't need to bring it in. Quelle difference.

Q. Right.
A. Alright? There's the difference. Here you have to fight your own. I remember one day I am in Rome at the time of an American holiday and Americans that are there that day, July Fourth, are invited by the Consul to come and have a drink with him at the consulate, and I am sure you know ... So I went there too and I made a remark to the Consul that I would love to talk to him, something that bothers me very, very much. So the consul at that time was a big American industrialist and he gave me the appointment and I came and I told him, it is impossible, we can't exist, we are over the people ... Prato is killing us. That Prato means, that is the American center for cheap manipulated fabrics. We can't compete. We don't know what to do. We can't get any help. So he was very nice and he said to me,
young man, as you know, I am also in business in the United states and I also went to Uncle Sam to tell him to help me and he also told me the same thing that I am telling you, help yourself, don't expect Uncle Sam to help you. And that is true, the truth, Uncle Sam won't help you. We don't, we have no protectionist policy whatsoever and that's a, to a degree, nature will take its course because if you want, and this I am stating to every manufacturer in the United States and in every field in which he might be, if you want to be successful as a manufacturer, you will never be successful as an importer. There are too many fallacies in importation and what you get. When you buy your domestic product from a domestic manufacturere that works here, that you work with, you have him right at your hand. If the man delivers you something, not in accordance to what you bought, you just turn it down. When you do by importation, you can't do that. You can whistle dixie and that is the differ..., that is the short-sightedness, that is the objection that I have. Yes, we should be an open country. I love it, but there must be some rhyme and reason for protecting American labor, American know how, and you can only protect it if you keep industries alive. Don't protect them. They don't need your protection. What they need is a tight controlled circulation. If you want it to be fifty, fifty, fine, but if you want to let them ship exports to us in a, in, in, in thirty percent and they ship fifty and it comes in, that's very
bad. That affects labor, that affects everything and anything. Today if you look around, I mean, you have hardly, in the ladies coat and suit business, any manufacturers left. Some of them became importers. A lot of them became importers and that is the sad story, and I'm not crying. I always felt that the saying, help yourself.

Q. Right, Paul, while we're talking about labor ... Do you find that you have the people that you need in your mills to do the work? Are you getting trained people that you want?

A. We are very conservative businessmen, in our organization. We don't take people and change people. We try to train the people to do their job and we have people that are with us from the beginning on.

Q. Right. But then, when they retire what happens?

A. When they retire, we train people.

Q. You take local people?

A. In, yes. We train people that are to be local people. The exception to it is that if I need highly educated technicians, technical people, well, I go to England and I find a good man, I try to bring him in. I tell Uncle Sam in the application, this is the reason because I need a permit from Uncle Sam to bring people in.

Q. What about the technical schools here. There are some, are there not?
A. Yea, but you need practice, you need know how. You have excellent schools here, textile schools, but now that I mention it, but you have fantastic schools here. My grandnephews, nephews are textile graduates in America. No, I feel that nature ultimately is taking its course. We ridicule, today, the price structure that we go in. High inflation. You would never believe that it is possible to get a price for something that is priced as is this price today, but it is. That's something that nature straightens out.

Q. What about new technology?

A. It's a very good question that you are asking. It's one of the very important matters in any industry today in the world, modernization, and if you want to be successful you have to be up with it even if you have to invest a lot of money. Because if you do not, you fall out. I could mention to you a very dear friend, not far away from us, who didn't buy the right machinery. He had to sue the people and try to buy new machinery. That's a very important thing, to watch development but it is not only in the textile field, that is in any field today.

Q. Well, but I'm interested specifically in textile because ...

A. Yes they are, they are, every year when you go to the textile machine exhibition wherever it is held, whether it is held here, whether it's held in Europe and we are at each and every one of them, you always find certain tools that you miss that are now
new and if you want to be with it, you buy it, you invest. And the fellow that does not invest in the industry and wants to, how do you call it? Pump everything out of the in..., he's finished.

Q. It seems to me that I read that about 1976 you invested really quite a lot of money in new...

A. Machinery.

Q. Machinery.

A. That's right. We did and we are still doing that.

Q. Uh, huh. Is that American made or European made or any ...?

A. That, it can be made anywhere.

Q. Anywhere? As long as you...

A. As long as it is the type of modern tool that helps you.

Q. Yes.

A. That helps us. In other words you have to watch it and that's not only in the textile industry. We have the same thing in the dairy business. We have to spend a fortune of money in keeping up to date. So there is, but this is nothing new; has always been.

Q. Let's go ..., the last thing I really would like to go into is the whole question of the designers, fashion designers input. Now, I have talked to a number of designers, good ones, and very often they will say that their first inspiration comes from fabrics...
A. Oh, yes. From the basics.

Q. Now, how does ...?

A. You have a very unusual situation existing at the present moment, especially in America, but I would say it is shaping up worldwide. Names are attached to any product to anything, alright? Even chocolate candy carries a name. I don't want to mention which one, but the situation is, in my opinion, a very sick situation because the designer ... Look what happened to the jeans business. The millions of dollars that were spent advertising, television and radio and magazines and whatever, you know, that costs millions of dollars instead of giving it to the consumer, the value for it. So that is overdone and adver..., designers today, more than I can every remember, when I came to this country Philip Mangone, he was a designer; Ben Zuckerman, he was a designer ...

Q. Stylist.

A. Stylist. They made their line. They, or they had an assistant to work with them, they made their line and they did not look right or left and they didn't underwrite shoes or socks or shirts or whatever. At the present moment, we are in the cycle where everything is underwritten. I don't care, I don't know how many. I think you would need a book to list all the various perfumes ...

Q. And ..., licenses of all sorts, yes.
A. You would be surprised.

Q. But, to get back to the designer, himself, or herself, is the designer any kind of factor in creating ...

A. Yes, will always be. The knowledge, the knowhow, the taste, especially in the ladies business, in the women's wear business, is the most important part; the number one fellow is the designer. In the menswear end of it, it is also the product, the exact fit of a menswear product. But in the women's wear business, where fashion is changing rapidly, seasonally, a menswear man can make the suit, a success suit for the next ten years, not the women's wear designer. He has to go with the trend of whatever happens but, I would say that the U.S. ..., and I don't say it to put any medals on them or on myself, but I would say that the United States of America has the best designers in the world in the ladies fashion business.

Q. Do you think the designers get ideas on what they are going to produce from seeing fabrics or do they come to you to ask you to creat fabrics?

A. It's both. It works both together. The designer is stimulated by happenings, wherever they are; by nature, wherever they are; that designer will create his garment, his creation, fitting into this particular picture. Now we in the United States have still designers who are actually what we called in Europe costume, costume makers. You take one fellow in California, and I could
mention name, that go, that travel around, they sell. That same holds true, for instance, today, for European designers. A very dear friend of mine, a Roman designer, he comes every year to the United States; he has shows at Martha's here and Martha's there and a store here, and a store there, they talk trunk shows, those shows called. And that stimulates a designer too especially if the designer does it. I am a great believer in good taste - passion in taste. I am not a believer in what I call square eggs, putting something together. I don't want to mention names and I don't want to say because this does not fit me to do it but that's the, the weak part. Now, the designers today that are interested to have their name plastered in the newspaper, radio, television and everywhere, they want to get money for it. That's the reason. It's not the ambition of creation, of creativity, it's underwritten by Mr. X or by Miss So and So, alright? It's a very, very, and the public takes it.

Q. It's a whole big change over in the fashion world.

A. It's a change over in the fashion world but they will come back to senses, they have to. You have, well, let me put it this way, you are long enough, as far as I remember, you have, having not only been with Ohrbach's, with B. Altman's, I think and ...

Q. Bergdorf's and ...

A. Bergdorf Goodman's and ...

Q. St. Laurent.
A. St. Laurent, so I know that you have been in it all the way through but do you realize that the makeup today is completely different? That a fellow who got popular for whatever reason because somebody picked him up and gave him promotions, whether it's in radio, television, the theatre stage, automatically then he's approached to underwrite for X dollars so and so, so and so, and he becomes a publicity ...

Q. And so he is no longer just, specifically a fashion designer?
A. He, in my opinion, he is not a fashion designer anymore. He's a designer for whatever it is; whoever underwrites him. He underwrites things that he doesn't even know about.

Q. Well, do you think that fashion is still as important today as it used to be?
A. Well, fashion goes in cycles and it has to do with economic, political situations worldwide. We are going to leave a cycle or are starting already to leave a cycle of sloppiness. And we are entering a cycle of ladylike looks. I don't know whether you see it. I can see it. It's already in the making. So that those are the cycles that come, alright? I am really looking forward to the change of fashion that is going to take shape in the next few years. I wanted to say next year but I don't want to be that specific.

Q. Yes, right.
A. But it's taking shape, the lady wants to be a lady again and that is very important because ...
Q. And that's going to affect fabric as part of fashion?

A. That is part that affects everything. It affects fabric, it affects color, alright? Mrs. Reagan showed a red coat; it was my fabric, it was my color. We called it Reagan red. So it has to do, this is the return to it, alright? Now, when you used to go, in America, to the theatre or to make it much stronger, to the opera which is a tremendous cultural art, you saw people dressed. If they couldn't wear a tuxedo, they wore a dark suit or a suit... It will happen again.

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