

Footprints

The Newsletter of the Shoe Service Institute of America

Spring 2014 • Volume 3, Issue 2

2014 SSIA CONVENTION PHILADELPHIA BOUND

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Plays Host July 19-20

SSIA is headed to the Philadelphia area for its 110th Annual Convention. The Doubletree by Hilton Valley Forge will host the event July 19-20, 2014.

Important: Hotel is Predicting a Sold Out Weekend and SSIA's Room Block is Almost Full

As this newsletter goes to press, there are only a few rooms left in SSIA's block. If you have not made your hotel reservations, do so today.

SSIA has secured a room rate of \$99 at the Doubletree by Hilton Valley Forge. The hotel is set in the welcoming Pennsylvania town of King of Prussia, where one of America's biggest shopping malls is located. The hotel is located 30 minutes from Philadelphia International Airport and has a number of attractive features. You'll find a link to the hotel's web site at www.ssia.info/convention.

Make your hotel reservations by calling 800-879-8372. Use the group code SSI to get the SSIA rate. SSIA has blocked a limited number of rooms.



SSIA's breakfast and annual meeting at this year's convention is open to members of the association only. If you are not a member and would like to join SSIA for breakfast, you can join online at www.ssia.info/join.



Expect the show floor to be packed July 19 and 20 for SSIA's convention at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Valley Forge. If you have not already registered, do so today.

Register Today

SSIA's convention will feature seminars to help shoe repairers with repair techniques and management and marketing strategies. The weekend will be loaded with networking opportunities to learn from peers and build relationships that will endure after the convention ends. The centerpiece of the weekend will be SSIA's expo. Exhibitors from around the world will be on hand displaying shoe repair products, retail items, machinery, point-of-sale systems and other products designed to make your business more profitable.

There is no charge to register for the show. You can register online today at www.ssia.info/convention.

Member Benefits at the Convention

This year's convention will feature special benefits for members only. Chief among them is only members will be invited to SSIA's annual meeting and breakfast Saturday morning. If you want to join SSIA for breakfast and are not currently a member, please join at www.ssia.info/join.

Attention Exhibitors

SSIA is now taking orders for exhibit space. We have held the line on prices from last year and enlisted the help of member finders to ensure a solid turnout. To reserve your space, visit www.ssia.info/convention or contact SSIA headquarters at 410-569-3425.

SSIA CONVENTION

More than a Trade Show: SSIA's Philadelphia Seminar Lineup

SSIA is offering several educational seminars at its Philadelphia convention. Here are some summaries. A complete schedule is available at www.ssia.info/convention.

Machinery Tuneup

Blase Knabl, Shoe Systems Plus, Goshen, NY

Blase Knabl will be on hand to answer all your machinery questions. Whatever your troubles are, note the make and model of your machine. Even bring samples if you like. This is an opportunity to learn how to solve them. Gain a better understanding on how to maintain your machinery to keep it running at peak performance. Helpful tips and maintenance guides will be handed out.

In Memoriam

SSIA mourns the passing of Robert Vernick since our last newsletter was published. Bob was active in SSIA for decades, first with Colonial Findings Company and most recently with RSV Enterprises.



SSIA attendees learning the finer points of bonding at last year's convention.

Organization Equals Money

Patrick Harper, A Cobbler, Canton, OH

Organizing your shop is a key to profitability and Patrick Harper, who has set up dozens of shops in his career will offer tips on topic such as knowing what materials are in your shop and where they are, knowing what materials can be prepared in advance, logical machine layout, work flow, work stations, organizing retail products, signage, maintenance schedules, job tracking and collecting customer data for marketing.

Identifying Materials to be Bonded

Jim McFarland C.Ped. McFarland's Shoe Repair, Lakeland, FL

Are you having problems bonding some materials? Silver Cup winner and Silver Cup judge Jim McFarland will show you how to identify the materials you see daily, and how easy it is to bond them.

continued on page 4



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is the last message I will have the honor of writing as president of the Shoe Service Institute of America. I want to express my thanks to the great boards I have had the pleasure of working with, and the many members who have helped along the way. I will always be thankful for the opportunity I was given to head this great organization.

The SSIA has been part of my life since I was a child. My summers growing up always included a road trip to the city hosting that year's SSIA convention. And back in the 60s, a convention it was. The convention was three or four days, and usually included a Saturday night bash. The dress code was dressy, and the parties lasted into the early hours of the next day. It was a different world back then, with 100 or more wholesalers attending the convention, and many more shoe repairers visiting the show. Suppliers had booths back then, and very often the Good-year Blimp was based at a local airport, with a ride for those members who were lucky enough to be selected by Goodyear.

Of course, there were over 60,000 shoe repairers in the United States back then, and hundreds of wholesalers. When my father would take me to New York on those Fridays I was not in school, we would visit the many wholesalers who were all located in the "Swamp," the area of New York City that was home to the shoe repair supply industry. There were even wholesalers in other parts of the Manhattan, and in all of the other boroughs. I can remember what a treat it was when I walked into a wholesaler and enjoyed the aroma of the dozens of cases of leather that made the stores smell so great.

My father would often drive my mom, sister and me from New Jersey to far off places like Chicago, Miami, Atlanta, San Francisco, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, even Las Vegas, to attend the convention. We would visit many wholesalers along the way, with my sister and I always amazed that they would all have cans of our cement in their stores — cement that I would sometimes help fill and pack. I was even more amazed when we would visit a shoe repair shop somewhere in the middle of the country and find the repairers using cans of our cement. It seemed that no matter where we would go, a can of our cement was always being used.

The shoe repair industry has been very good to my family for over 80 years. I must say that after 20 years of practicing law, I was secretly happy that I was finally a part of our family business, although it took my father's death to bring me aboard.

The one major difference between being a trial lawyer and selling cement, which I noted immediately when I came to Petronio, is that lawyers are always fighting. We fight over the smallest things. Even a real estate transaction can be hostile.

But our industry is so different. I am friends with not only my customers, but also with my competitors. We are all one big family involved in one of the oldest trades known to man.

If you really think about it shoe repair is truly one of the oldest trades that remains almost the same as it did 100 or more years ago. There are not many industries older than the shoe industry, other than maybe farming.

Imagine going through life barefoot? We never have. Even cave-men wore sandals. Open any magazine and you will see more ads for shoes than anything else. We should all be proud to be part of this great industry.

But we are more than an industry. The craftsmanship that I see in our industry is amazing. Every time we have another Silver Cup contest here at Petronio, I am blown away by the many beautiful shoes that are submitted. When I visit shops and look at some of the work that is out there, I feel like it is more of an art than an industry.

We must all work as a family to continue this exceptional tradition. We must all understand that we carry on a craft that has been handed down since almost as long as man has walked this earth. We should all be proud to be part of our industry. And membership in the SSIA is the best way to show your true colors.

*Don Rinaldi, President
Shoe Service Institute of America*

SSIA Poster Contest

SSIA is creating a collection of posters promoting shoe repair. Artwork will be available for members to download free of charge. It will be ready to take to your local sign and banner store (Staples, Fedex Office, etc.) for quick and easy posters.

The association is offering members a chance to get in on the design action. The theme of the posters is, "Shoe Repair, It's More than You Think." Posters should incorporate that slogan, the SSIA logo (available for download in the members only section of SSIA's web site) and the artwork of your choice. Finished artwork should be 24 x 36 inches and submitted as a high resolution PDF file.

Send your entries to SSIA (webmaster@ssia.info) by June 20, 2014. They will be judged and the winner(s) will be presented at SSIA's 2014 Annual Convention in Philadelphia.

Support the Companies that Support You

The following companies are supplier members of SSIA. Their support of this association helps us bring you this newsletter, our conventions and everything else we do. Please support them as they support you.

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Tauer & Johnson, LLC
Toe Armor
Topy, S.A.
URAD Products (Dynamique 9, Inc.)
Vibram USA



Gaining Customers Through the Internet Blase Knabl, Jr., Shoe Systems Plus

Technology is rapidly expanding; is your business keeping up? This seminar will provide useful information for gaining higher visibility on the internet, understanding how customers will find your business and step-by-step instructions on how to create and maintain an attractive Google Places listing for free. Instruction packet will be given out to all attendees for easy future reference.

Gaining Your Customers' Trust Using Social Media Marcelo Coronel, Gus New Quality Shoe Repair, Chicago, IL

With whom have you done business before? Who has previously trusted you to provide a solution to their problems and needs?

Years ago, small businesses wanted to appear large so customers would trust them. They produced fancy stationery and secured a respectable business address.

This has all changed with the Internet, where customers value the human voice. Now every business wants to appear small and provide personal service to its customers. Use social media to create a place where you interact with custom-

ers regularly. Not only will this increase your visibility within shoe repair industry, but it can also help to create a sense of community for your customers. Regular interaction with customers can keep them engaged with your company and foster deeper feelings of loyalty. Use social media to answer questions about your products or services and to promote your expertise. Prospective customers still want to know your company's track record.

What the Silver Cup Contest Can Do For You

Grand Silver Cup winner and Silver Cup judge Jim McFarland will lead a panel of Silver Cup winners in discussing excellence in shoe repair craftsmanship. Specifically, the panelists will discuss the finer points that make the difference between quality work and award-winning work. They will also discuss the benefits of participating in SSIA's Silver Cup Contest and how success in the contest can translate to profit for your business.

How to Grow Your Sales and Profits

Tauer & Johnson representatives Tom Wilhite & Ken Johnson along with Tom Giamalva, Palace Shoe Repair, Rockford, IL will discuss the challenges in today's market and the opportunities for shoe repair.

SSIA Shirts and Aprons Available
SSIA t-shirts are available in black and pink. SSIA aprons are available in black. Visit www.ssia.info/apparel to see them.



FEATURED SHOP

RONALD NIJDAM ON WHY SHOE REPAIR IS A GREAT BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

This month, SSIA profiles Quick Cobbler located in Vancouver, BC and its owner, Ronald Nijdam.

Tell us about your background in the shoe repair industry.

My grandfather back in Holland was a shoe repairer. My dad and his brother were shoe repairers as well. So I grew up in the industry. It was always an easy part-time job when I was in college. I never really wanted to be a shoe repairer, but I tried to make money a few other ways and found out that shoe repair was actually the best way.

I've owned Quick Cobbler for 25 years. Originally,



Ronald Nijdam of Quick Cobbler in Vancouver, BC

I opened eight stores for my boss at the time. I then took over two of them and have since scaled back to one. We have 10 people working here, six men and four women.

So what are the keys to making it profitable?

There are a few things, but first, you have to understand that your money comes from your customers, so you have to treat them right. Charge a fair price (and it's fine to be on the high side, we are) and deliver a quality product. Quality is a must. You cannot turn out poor work and expect to be successful no matter what you charge.

As a shoe repairer, you can't be worried about other shoe repairers as competition. There are not enough of us. That's why this is such a nice industry to be in. In my view, I have a monopoly where I am. Sure, there are other shoe repairs in the area. Usually, they work different ends of the market. They do more while-you-wait work or more hiking boot repair or they focus more on their immediate neighborhood. I do a lot of mail order work and work with shoe stores. There is something for everyone.

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Visit www.ssia.info/join to become a member today. You can join online or download an application to return by mail.



Quick Cobbler in Vancouver, BC

Shoe repair is a very attractive industry because there is no competition, the profit margin on raw materials is huge compared to most other service businesses and I get to work in an industry where the standard of sophistication is low. If I have a computerized cash register, I'm already a level above most shoe repairers.

To distinguish yourself in a positive way in this industry is relatively easy. If you run a clean shop, if you are clean-shaven yourself, if you speak English well, if you have a computerized cash register and a nice sign outside, and if you deliver a quality product, you are in the top five percent.

What do you do to distinguish yourself?

You have only a few seconds to make a first impression. So when people come into my store, I try to make a very positive first impression. I make sure the store is clean and bright, the staff is friendly and the store is organized so customers don't have to worry about whether we'll find their shoes if they leave them.

Once that is done, you don't have to do much else – except, of course, deliver a quality product. I can't stress that enough. If your shop oozes quality, cleanliness and friendliness, customers are fine with leaving their shoes with you. They are fine with paying a reasonable price and fine with whenever you tell them to pick up the shoes.

I always try to under promise and over deliver. So if we say we're going to put on protective soles and find the shoes need

heels, a shine or laces, we'll throw that in. The cost of materials is minimal, less than \$2. You can't print \$2 worth of flyers or signage and get that kind of effect.

You have 10 people working for you. How hard is it to train them to your quality standards?

It's not as hard as you might think. Most people, given the chance and the right training, are much happier turning out a quality product than a bad product. Usually we can spot people who are willing to learn. And if you're willing to learn, we can teach you how to do a good job.

I have regular interviews with my staff and I impress upon them that what they make in terms of pay is affected by how well they do their job. And this sounds logical to me, but in many places, it's not. It's how many years you have been around. But here, I definitely have a scale of where their skills are and what kinds of complicated jobs they can do. That affects how much money they make. I try to stimulate people to do their best. If they are not interested in doing their best, they usually get enough of me nagging them and they leave.

What are the best things you have done for your business?

We started requiring payment in advance about 10 years ago and that's one of the best things I have ever done. When I didn't have prepay, I had a system to track how long the shoes were in the store, and every Friday afternoon I would call people to remind them their shoes were still here. I got to the point that



Quick Cobbler in Vancouver, BC.

there were so many shoes here, I spent all day Friday calling people and asking them for their money.

So my bookkeeper said, "You don't make any money yourself on Fridays. You're just chasing money you should already have in the till. So that whole Friday is wasted." She put me in touch with a dry cleaner who required that everything be prepaid and I asked how that affected his business. It took months to get over the scary thought of going prepaid. When I finally did it, in 10 years we may have had 10 people walk out the door because of it and those are probably the 10 people who would not have come back for their shoes anyway.

Many people ask why they have to pay in advance. I usually tell them the story about my Fridays. Once they have invested money in a job, they remember to come back. Their money is already here. They want value for that money. That saves me time and energy chasing them down to pick up the jobs. And things happen in people's lives. It's not that they're unwilling to pay, it's just many times they're unable to pay. Some other bills came up, or they're out of town or something else came up. Shoe repair is way down on the list of things that are important. I understand that. But when they're prepaid, we move up on the list. It has worked really well in terms of speed of pick-up.

Many people say they never pay in advance for anything. That is not correct. If you go to Starbucks, you pay and wait for your coffee. If you buy a monthly bus pass, you pay before you use the bus for a month. If you go to college, you pay the tuition up front and have no idea what the quality of the product is going to be until they deliver it. People pay in advance for a huge number of things that they don't realize. It is not out of the ordinary for a shoe repairer to ask for prepayment.

Another thing that has helped my business is that I'm constantly streamlining my web site, www.quickcobbler.com. I urge shoe repairers to have a web site, even if it is a one-page deal with a short story of your store, your address, directions, contact information and hours you are open.

Your web site should answer the questions people ask when they call you. Where can I park? How can I get to you? When are you open? You can stick that all on one page with a picture of the store so they recognize it when they drive by. That, along

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What do you want to do in 2014 to grow your business?

We do good business working for other businesses – shoe stores, manufacturers, orthopedic labs and the like. I'm investing more money and time in that area.

Also, we have identified a number of types of work that we're good at and that have a promising future. We want to focus on footwear that is in some way special. It is special because it has

a special function such as a rock climbing shoe or a tap dancing shoe. Or it is special because it has a special or unique brand that would be expensive or difficult to replace. So we focus on a number of brands that are expensive and very much repairable.

There is footwear that is special because it is for police, fire or ambulance workers. It is expensive, but it also has a special use and special requirements. For instance, I cannot use regular glue on fire fighters' footwear. It has to be a special glue that is not affected by heat. The sewing has to be done with a fire-proof thread. If I make sure I can do the right job with the right materials and do it the right way, I have distinguished myself from the "regular" shoe repair. That business will come to me whether the economy is good or bad, whether the weather is good or bad, and whether we are on a main street or in a back alley. And once you get a reputation for doing that kind of work well, the bread-and-butter repair jobs come along with them.

Will there be a fourth generation to continue your family legacy?

Both of my sons work part-time in the shop. I have an 18-year-old and a 22-year-old. They both do the same thing as I used to do. Their spending money comes from the store. Like my father, I'm trying not to pressure them to take over the business. That's their choice.

My happiness in life is doing what I like to do, not what people tell me to do. So if they like to work here, there is definitely a spot for them. If they decide to do something different, you should do what you're good at and what you like to do.

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SILVER CUP CONTEST

WHAT AN AWARD CAN DO FOR YOU by Jim McFarland, C.Ped.



Born and raised in the shoe repair business like so many, years later here we all are ... together in a trade trying to make a living, trying to survive. I'd like to share with you the power of being a winner and using it to make yourself a better living for the rest of your life.

My family has been in the shoe repair trade for three generations – since 1918 – in a typical old shop just like most of them out there ... all over the world. Around 1990, at the age of 26, I decided I was going to be different. What is different in this trade? It's being involved in your industry, for one. It's making your store clean and organized so things run efficiently. It's putting on the best in quality.

We have spent thousands of dollars advertising with less than a one percent return on our money. Now I'm going to tell you what you can do without spending anything but time.

SSIA has run its Silver Cup Contest for more than 80 years. I first entered the contest in 1990. The first year I entered, my box came back a few weeks later and I said to myself, "My Silver Cup must be in this box." I opened it and, to my amazement, there were my shoes. "This has to be a mistake," I thought. I knew my entry was good enough to win that cup.

Then I looked at my scoresheets. They were so bad I didn't enter for two or three years. I felt the judges didn't know what they were doing.

Then I realized my work needs a lot of improvement. So my first bit of advice is, if you do not win, take it as a step forward. You took the time to enter. Now take the results and make them better for next time. Talk to the award winners. Find out what they did and use your scoresheets to make improvements. You can find most of the recent award winners on SSIA's Facebook page.

This also makes your everyday work better. I used to repair the contest shoe my way. What's wrong with my way? It's not what the rules stated for the contest. The rules

The soul of a shoe.

Joh. Rendenbach jr.

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said to restore the worn out shoe to its original, factory condition. That meant if the bottom was plain, then make it plain. If it was originally black, then make it black. Make sure the balance is good. Make sure you don't change the shape of the shoe.

Grand Silver Cup

Finally, in 2002, I won the Grand Silver Cup. My Super Bowl moment finally arrived. The key? Never quit! It took me 12 years. I got better every year until I did everything I needed to do. This didn't make me the best. It just made me the best that entered the contest. There is always somebody better, but you can't win unless you enter.

If you receive any award, make a press release and send it to all of your local media. You don't have to win the Grand Silver Cup. We received front-page articles for second and third place awards. And it doesn't end there. It has been 12 years since I won the Grand Silver Cup and we are still getting coverage. Customers come in and see the trophy and all of the articles and they tell their friends. We were in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Money* magazine and *USA Today*. We got some publicity on television from Oprah Winfrey and much more. I never spent a dime. The dividends keep coming because people believe in you when they know you have won awards for craftsmanship. Plaster your wall with every article about you. Place your awards where they can be seen.



National Recognition

One night, my wife and I were out eating dinner when we were the opening story on NBC's nightly news. We had no idea this was going to happen. It was nationwide. A local television station came to the store, liked what they saw and passed it on to the network. People called from across the country – all because I got involved.

The next Silver Cup Contest will be held in 2015 and awards will be presented at SSIA's 111th Annual Convention in Jacksonville, FL. To learn more about the Silver Cup Contest, visit SSIA's web site. The rules for the 2015 contest have been posted.

If you're coming to this year's convention in Philadelphia, make sure to attend the Silver Cup seminar on Sunday. You can meet the judges, ask questions and make sure you're prepared for a successful result.

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WHY I CHOSE SHOE REPAIRING OR DID IT CHOOSE ME?

by Gene Hartsock

In January, I began my 45th year repairing shoes, and other things we repair in our shoe repair businesses.

The first couple of days, I just got the coffee and doughnuts for the guys on Saturdays after my paper route was done. Two brothers, my friends, worked there doing rip work along with their dad who was the henchman doing soles and heels. They were about to graduate from high school, and were asked to find someone to take their place. It was me. It became my path, my way of life for these years since.

The Singer patch machine was located in the basement, at the bottom of the stairs, next to the restroom, along with the sole stitchers, and the new Sutton sandblaster machine for dye work. There was also a walk-in safe where they kept their money each night, along with their wine collection. That is where I started. Within a couple of months, I was given a key, so they didn't have to lock me in the shop at night. They spent time in the odd fellows hall bar upstairs playing pool.

In 1969, the rip work consisted of a lot of hand-sewing moccasins, both straight and whipstitches. Adding gold chains to the front to copy new Bass Shoes that came with chains, and lots of farmer shoes. I eventually earned \$70 - \$100 a week, which to

a 15-year-old guy was a lot of money. I am glad he made me learn this way, because there are days when nothing but sewing came in. Eventually I also learned the soles and heels, and even ran the counter when my boss went on vacation. That was also fun — 19-years-old and running the shop for two weeks.

I didn't grow up in this trade like many of my new-found friends on SSIA's and other Facebook pages. I took a different route. Some paths I chose. Other things caused me to change direction. Twenty years passed until I bought my shop. Today I have my own shop for more than 25 years. I have moved and remodeled a couple times.

After working in Iowa City for more than four years, I visited Minneapolis for my vacation. I had a lot of spare time. One day I walked downtown and casually asked people on the street, "Where can I get my shoes fixed?" They told me, Dayton's, Donaldson's Penny's and Power's. They were four major department stores downtown, four blocks in a row. First I visited Dayton's, which was a 12-story business in the heart of downtown Minneapolis. I found the shoe shop in the basement. The entire store appeared nearly empty as I found my way down to the shop.



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So happens it was the annual Aquatennial Parade time: marching bands, floats, etc. Clarence Carvelli the owner was alone because he had sent the shoemakers home. I introduced myself to him, and mentioned. I worked in the business in Iowa, and he joked: "I won't hold that against you!" Then he invited me in back. He surprised me and handed me a woman's pair of nail on heels for lifts. "Show me what you can do," he said. He set up a bench with the materials, and I took about 10 minutes, attached, trimmed, and a quick shine. (An accomplished job, I thought.) He casually said, "Watch me." In three minutes, he cut, nailed, and trimmed his pair, with a shine. "That's the way we do it here," he said. "Some times we do 15 pair at a time all day, 200 - 300 pairs of ladies heels a day." I was shocked. The men's bench workers also did many soles and heels daily — about \$3,000 a day in business during the late 70s.

I decided to move to the Twin Cities. I called Clarence in October saying I wanted to begin-in December. "That's great," he said.

I packed my Camaro and moved to Minnesota only to find out Clarence's wife had hired someone else. She misunderstood when I was coming. Great! Christmas week, \$60 in my pocket, a car payment due, and no job.

Then I remembered the Sutton machine salesman mentioned if I was ever up in Minneapolis, I had to check out Ralph's Shoe Service, because he always bought the newest shoe repair equipment. I found the shop in Southdale Shopping Center. He wasn't hiring, but a finders salesman was there, Lou Pedro of Perkie's. He told me that Joe Rucci in Rosedale shopping center,

needed someone. (I later learned Joe is the brother of the guy who owned my shop for 45 years!)

I called Joe, and he hired me. I found out I didn't know how to trim leather soles yet. All of the shoes I did in Iowa were rubber-soled. An old German shoemaker, Fritz, was also there helping, and I learned some neat tricks from him. I wasn't ready to manage the shop, and Joe wasn't a very good owner. He was in debt to every finder, and that caused me problems if I wanted to order supplies.

I called Clarence again and found the job open for me at Dayton's. I was there the next day. It was one of the best things that happened to me, one of the busiest shops in the nation. You really had to be on your toes. Everything was fast.

Working for Joe was my first difficult job, but it was worth it. I had to solve problems and found out if I told the customers the truth, they would be patient. It had its place in my history.

I worked at Dayton's for more than four years, first as the finisher. I had three bench men throw shoes to me to finish — sand and trim their soles and heels, stitch and trim the soles, finish and polish them while trimming as many of the women's top-lifts as I could with the women's bench guy. Every afternoon, Clarence came from Saint Paul, then we had three guys doing ladies heels. I already knew how to run the Singer, I did many sewing jobs too. Saturdays I ran the men's bench.

One time, one of the bench men asked me if I had ever seen a boot factory. Across the river in St Paul, there was a boot factory



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called Gokey's. Upstairs, above their store of sports clothes, hunting and fishing equipment, sports art, etc, there was the boot factory. Gokey's was still making handmade (bristle sewn) moccasin shoes and boots at that time. Their masterpiece was a snake-bite-proof knee high boot. They wanted to hire me on the spot, as they needed a finisher. I was now married, and my wife was pregnant. I needed a higher paying job.

I had never mckayed so many shoes before — 30 to 90 pairs every day! Some of the boots had rubber midsoles and there were some hand-stitched welted shoes. My three-man crew attached midsoles, hand trimmed them, mckayed them, then attached, stitched soles and nailed on the heels. Everything piled up to be finished and boxed for shipping every Friday. Eventually, I earned extra money by doing boot repairs, evenings and weekends, talking to customers all around the USA and beyond. I watched and learned how they lasted shoes, and the hand-sewing and the fitting of shoes, which helped me do the repairs. I also was in on the beginning of the computerized tickets.

I heard rumors of Gokey's selling out to another group and I started thinking about working somewhere else. I had worked there for five years. We had two children and a house payment. I saw a job opening at an orthopedic business. They would hire me, send me to the orthopedic school in the morning and have me work for them in afternoon. At the same time, the VA called to interview me to run the shoe modification part of their orthopedic lab. (My foreman at the factory was nice to give them the tip to interview me.) My wife also saw a job opening for a shoe shop manager at Schuler Shoes. Skills I acquired working on the handsewn moccasin style shoes and boots there, still really help

me in rebuilding moccasin style shoes, and also knowing the basics of shoemaking with other kinds of shoes.

I decided to take the shoe repair manager job in 1980. I managed their shop for more than four years. Eventually, I hired a men's bench guy, a sewing lady from the shoe repair school and a counter person. I ended up running the women's bench. Everything was going great. I was a manager. I learned to buy materials, hire workers, help with customer service complaints from the shoe store and run the shop as my own. I had to make business plans for each year. The store owner tried to teach me new ways of being in business. I developed a bonus plan for each of my workers which really got the shop off the ground and running. The more money my employees made, the more I made. I was planning on moving from Saint Paul to Golden Valley.

Then I found out I had kidney disease. Now what?

I had built the shop up to be a four-man shop, and now I would have to go on dialysis or have a transplant? How could I run the shop?

I decided to leave that job, and look for a shop to buy. I was hired by one shop to buy it, but after a year, I didn't want to buy it. He laid me off. I tried for two years again to buy a shop, but the original owner came back to take over. It was similar area to my shop now, and was first place I had customers prepay.

I was able to get a personal loan from a friend, for \$1,500 to finally buy my first shop in October of 1988. Within two months,



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SSIA Convention Videos Available

Would you like to come to SSIA's convention but can't? Here's an opportunity to catch some of what is happening. SSIA will be streaming parts of its upcoming convention. You will be able to watch it live or review the video after the fact.

You can also see some video clips from SSIA's 2013 convention. Check out the following link:

www.bambuser.com/channel/SSIA

Follow SSIA's Facebook page for details on what you can view this year.

the owner of the shop I have now (with three boxes of shoes for me to do) came to me to ask me to buy his shop. I told him, "I just bought this shop!" He said, "My shop is better!"

In December of 1988, I gave him a \$200 payment to start a five-year loan to buy this shop, and took over in January of 1989. Now I had two shops! (Then I finally became the kidney patient on dialysis, with a transplant in my future.) My wife helped me with one of the shops. My hours were 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. My wife came in at noon, and left at 4 p.m. and I switched shops.

Then I had the transplant, but due to complications from the steroids, I started having bad feet. I needed arch supports. I

went to Gillette's Children's Orthopedic Hospital to have them made. During a conversation, the lab tech asked what I did for a living. As she did the molds of my feet, I told her I owned a shoe repair business. She said, "hold that thought," and brought the foreman for Gillette's orthopedic department. He asked if I did external orthopedic shoe lifts and whether I could provide a sample of a sole lift job for them and a price list. I visited an orthopedic shoe store and asked if I could have an orthopedic pair of shoes laying around so I could do a build up. He gave me two pairs and said, "do a sample for me, too."

After three years, I sold the original shop. I moved this shop to my present location.

I was doing work for Gillette and other shoe stores. I had a couple shine guys bringing in work, which helped me buy new machinery. The guy who bought my old shop also kept bringing shoes to me. And best of all, Clarence was now helping me!

I was busy in my new shop from the very beginning. What a miracle. What a life. I paid my shop off in three years instead of five.

I had a subscription to *Shoe Service* magazine from the first month I owned my shop. I saw Robert DiRinaldo win the silver cup and others. I read the many articles. When I got a computer to get online, I found the Shop Talk site. I became a member, and started watching the postings. In 2004, I went to my first regional shoe repair show in Milwaukee. In 2006, I went to a show in Kansas City and, in 2008, Chicago. I met many of you that I know now.



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In 2005, (Quabaug/Vibram) recognized me as a top shop, and Vibram of Italy featured me with a molded shoe repair I rebuilt. Also that year I became an Authorized Birkenstock Repair Center. Everything was going good now.

Then In 2009, I had another kidney transplant and had to start over again. This time I didn't recover as fast, and realized I had to slow down. I also had someone in 2012, start to learn this business to buy my shop from me. Unfortunately, he got hurt terribly in a tree accident and hasn't returned. Now I am re-learning how to run my shop by myself.

Looking back, if I hadn't gone to the three shoe repair conventions and learned the new gluing methods from first, Robert DiRinaldo, then Jim McFarland, I don't know if I would have succeeded in this business. If I hadn't gone to the Shop Talk website, and new ones, I wonder what might have happened. My two kidney transplants could not have gone better. I have a great wife, and great customers who have been patient with me through all. My faith in God has increased through all this also. Without these experiences, I would have nothing to say.

I always listen to customers, and I always listen to shoe repairers talk about their ups and downs, the new products, subjects, like, about being in shopping centers (the rage of the early 80s) the best ways to finish soles, how to stitch soles, the best leather soles, gluing the new vinyl soles, the best machines, sandpaper, merchandising, displaying retail, etc.

Did I choose shoe repairing? Yes, and it chose me too! I am glad I stuck with it.

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IMAGINE GOING THROUGH LIFE BAREFOOT by Don Rinaldi

Imagine going through life barefoot! Sound like fun? What about when you think about the hot pavement, rain, sleet, snow, dirt and all of the other tough stuff our shoes weather? Makes you realize that shoes are a necessity of life.

The same is true of shoe repair. For as long as man has worn footwear, man has repaired footwear. And just how long has shoe repair been around? Well, when the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock, the Native Americans were wearing moccasins. And the early Romans and Greeks wore sandals every day, and boots were worn in battle. Even Jesus wore sandals!

We can safely state that shoe repair is one of the oldest trades still carried on today — not only in America, but worldwide. There are few trades or industries older than shoe repair.

Looking at the February, 1945 edition of *Shoe Service* magazine, you will find a breakdown of shoe repair shops in the United States, state by state. There was a total of **58,942** shoe repair shops in the United States on that date. New York alone had over 7,000 shops; Pennsylvania was second, with over 4,000; Illinois and Ohio each had over 3,000; with Texas, New Jersey, California, Michigan, Massachusetts each having over 2,000 shops.

By 1997, there were only 15,000 shoe repair shops in the United States. Today, we have less than **7,000** shoe repair shops in the United States. And the number is dwindling every day. Why?

Back in the day, shoes were worn every day, day in and day out. Growing up in the 1950s, you had a pair of black shoes for dress and a pair of brown shoes for most everyday. Sneakers were few and far between. Kids played outdoors in their shoes. If you look at pictures of sporting events from the 1940s and 1950s, the players wore a leather type of boot or shoe, with either leather or rubber soles. When sneakers became an everyday item in the 1950s, they were only worn on the playing fields. If you went outside to ride your bike or to play tag or stickball, you wore your play shoes.

So shoe repair was a big part of life back in the day. Once Americans started wearing sneakers or athletic shoes as everyday footwear, the shoe repair industry started to decline. Add casual shoes to the mix, plus inexpensive throw-away shoes, it is easy to see why shoe repair continued to decline. Finally, if you look at today's fashion magazines and television shows, you quickly realize that shoes are in style for a season, and then America moves on to something different. There is just less and less thinking of shoe repair.

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The good news for shoe repair is this is now changing. If you really **THINK GREEN**, you repair, not throw away your shoes. If you want to save money in these tough economic times, you bring your shoes to a shoe repairer who can extend the life of your shoes. Here is what most people do not know or understand.

Shoe Repair can: increase the life of most leather and fabric shoes; apply weather protector to protect against the snow and rain; replace plastic heel lifts with rubber lifts to minimize slipping; stretch your shoes as your foot structure changes; replace insoles and sock linings; dye shoes a new color; repair baseball gloves and other sporting equipment; make luggage and brief case repairs; repair purses; clean leather; repair leather garments; install new zippers in garments; the list goes on and on.

The shoe repair professional can also teach you about items you can purchase at the shoe repair shop, to help you "do it yourself." And it's more than just shoe polish. There are dozens of items you can purchase from your shoe care professional that will help you maintain your shoes and extend the life of your shoes. The list goes on forever.

The Shoe Service Institute of America, www.ssia.info, is the trade association for the shoe repair and related industries. The SSIA is over 100 years old, and its members are from all three segments of the shoe repair industry. Members are either suppliers (those who make the products for shoe repair, such as leather soles, adhesives, heels, etc.); wholesalers (stores

that sell all of the items that a shoe repair shop must have, such as soles, heels, adhesives, nails, dyes, shoe laces, polish, sandpaper, ... literally thousands of items); and finally the **SHOE REPAIRER**, the most important segment of our industry.

The SSIA has one trade shoe a year, with the 2014 show to be held the weekend of July 19 and 20 in Philadelphia, PA. Last year's show was in San Diego. We will be in Jacksonville, FL in July, 2015.

The SSIA also sponsors the Silver Cup competition, with a very big and expensive Silver Cup awarded to the best repair in the contest. Last year it took our Silver Cup judges, who are all past winners of the Silver Cup, nine hours to judge the shoes submitted. The next Silver Cup contest will be held in 2015 and will feature two categories — one for North American entrants and one for international competitors

Shoe repair is alive and well. If you have shoes, sooner or later you will need shoe repair. We hope you call soon!

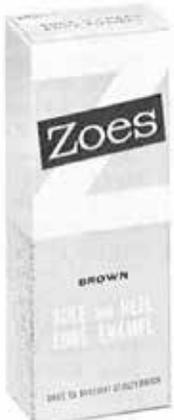
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This year, Shoe Systems Plus, Inc. is introducing several new lines of machinery to enhance their Supreme® Shoe Machinery line.

First, they've added Jos America from Holland. The Supreme Flexam systems feature state-of-the-art controls, which include automated dust ports that open when work is sensed in front of each sanding wheel. When paired with a patented Flexam external dust extractor, suction speed is automatically increased and decreased depending on work load. This feature will provide significant electrical savings. Another unique feature includes the ability to incorporate machine height adjustability. Having your machine set at the proper height will help ease back strain and reduce fatigue. To further promote ergonomics, a sliding chair can be built into the machine. This will enable injured or disabled people to work. Since all Flexam machinery is produced to customer specifications, almost any feature the customer desires can be incorporated into the final product.

The largest shoe repairing facility in the USA, Leather Spa, has recently upgraded all of their finishing equipment to Flexam.

Their new, 18,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art factory, utilizes the Flexam capabilities to reduce production times, reduce noise and dust pollution, and increase profits.

To further promote product diversity and to offer more economical options, Shoe Systems Plus, Inc. has partnered with Götz GmbH. The GP line of machinery is Italian made, performs with relatively low noise levels and provides excellent dust extraction. While economically priced, GP has a solid reputation for durability.

Lastly, Shoe Systems Plus, Inc. will soon be introducing the latest solution to insole and outsole stitching. Coming in the second quarter of 2014, two brand new machines will be available for purchase. The Supreme 316 Stitch Master will replace the aging and difficult to service Landis 12 and Rapid E Outsole Stitches. The Supreme McKay Master will be an economical solution to customers' insole stitching needs. This heavy duty Lockstitch McKay will be affordable and backed by a two year warranty. For more information, contact Shoe Systems Plus, Inc. direct at 1-800-354-6278 or info@shoesystemsplus.com

DUNBAR SHOE REPAIR PROGRAM GOING STRONG

The shoe repair program at Washington, DC's Dunbar High School is still going strong. You may remember SSIA members donated equipment and supplies to the shoe repair training program at Spingarn Senior High School last school year. Springarn closed and instructor John "Peterbug" Matthews found a new home to teach his trade at Dunbar.

The shoe repair program is now thriving with more than 100 students. In a city that is changing physically and culturally, Matthews' story is a typical one. Like many school employees, he was born and raised in the District and learned how to make a

living from the city's school systems. And for 20 years, he's given back to the community that gave him so much.

Matthews started the school year with 38 students. If you would like to donate products or supplies, you can send them to:

Peter Bug Matthews
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SSIA CONVENTION

THINGS TO DO IN PHILADELPHIA

Famous as the birthplace of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, Philadelphia offers much more than cobblestone streets and historical landmarks. Cultural, culinary, artistic and ethnic treasures abound in this city and its surrounding countryside.

What makes Philadelphia so memorable is its unique blend of experiences that you have to discover in person. By day, explore four centuries of history and architecture, beautiful neighborhoods, remarkable museum collections and endless shopping. After the sun sets, the city heats up with acclaimed performing arts, amazing dining and vibrant nightlife.

If you're planning to spend some time in Philadelphia before or after SSIA's convention, here are some links that will help you plan your visit.

Visit Philadelphia - www.visitphilly.org

Valley Forge Convention & Visitors Bureau - www.valleyforge.org.



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