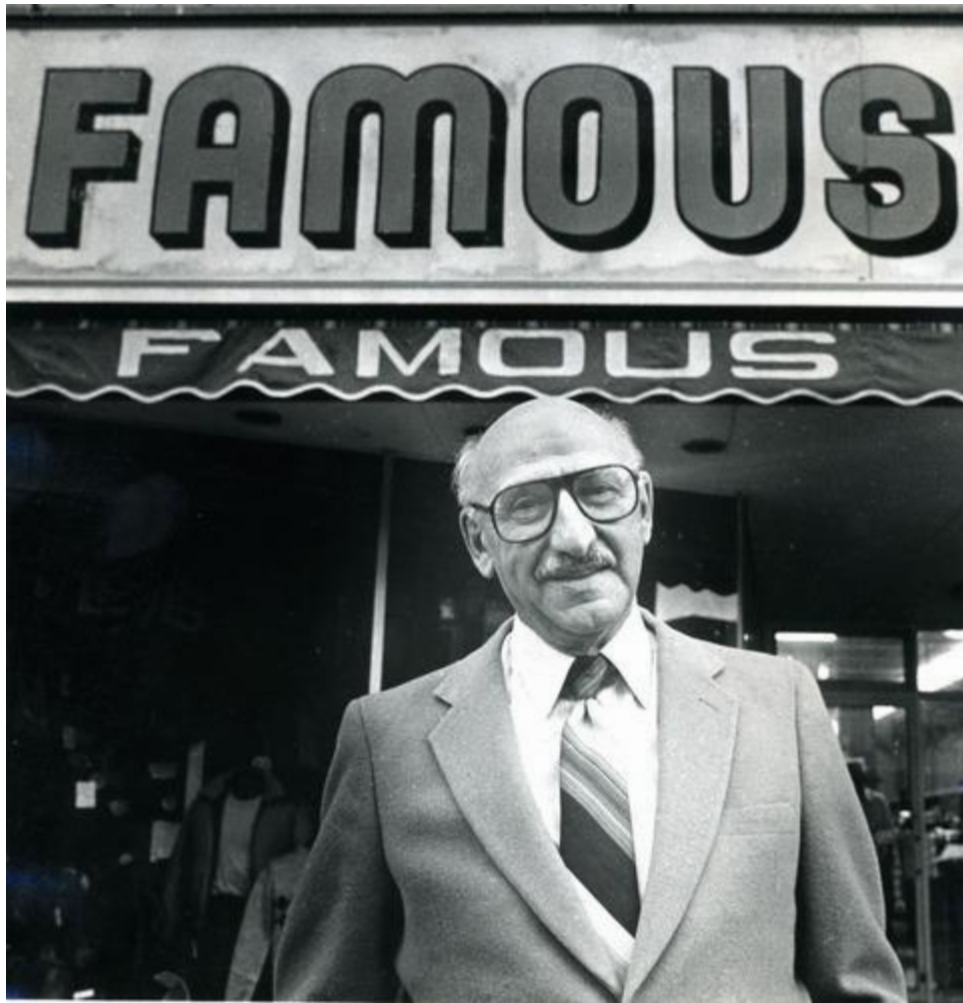


Famous Clothing, 1983

 [January 11, 2009](#)  [Andrew](#) 

November 13, 1983



Julius Horwitz, owner of Famous Clothing, will close his store when its inventory is sold out. (Joey McLeister / News-Tribune)

FAMOUS CLOTHING'S CLOSING TO END ERA OF QUALITY, CARING

By Jack Shipley, News-Tribune staff writer

Julius Horwitz says he's not reluctant to close Famous Clothing after 50 years, but his friends say that's not so.

"He feels badly about it," said Philip Abalan Sr., a friend of Horwitz.

Horwitz, who plans to close the store when its inventory is sold out, doesn't show any sadness. It's been a good life, though a little tough at times, and he'd rather look ahead.

His father and his uncle in 1926 started The Famous Woolen Co., later to become Famous Clothing, at 12 E. Superior St. Horwitz' father died the year the business started.

Horwitz came into the business in 1933, two years out of school.

"All the young men were moving, looking for jobs," Horwitz said. "A number of times I hitchhiked to Chicago or Kansas City, but I couldn't find any work."

He mentions spending \$2.50 a week for a room at the YMCA and sometimes not being able to pay his bills – he earned about \$7 a week. The unpaid bills were torn up by the manager.

There was a pool hall, Horwitz said, run by – he stumbles over several attempts at a Greek name before giving up – "His name was Steve."

The pool hall had a lunch counter, but Horwitz said he often didn't have enough money for lunch. He'd bet what he had on a game of dice. "Hooligan, it was called," he said.

He'd win and eat; lose and be penniless. "Julius, what's the matter?" Steve would bellow. "You lose your money playing hooligan? Come, I'll give you something to eat."

Horwitz, in his own way, is still repaying the YMCA and Steve at the pool hall. He believes if one is part of a community, one should give something to that community.

"He's a big-hearted man," said Abalan. "I know he's given lots of people clothing or coats." Horwitz is active in a number of civic groups, Abalan said.



Crowds gather just before the 9 a.m. opening of Famous Clothing's going-out-of-business sale on Nov. 17, 1983. (Charles Curtis / News-Tribune)

But perhaps more important than the generosity is that Horwitz became a mentor. His legacy is the young people who worked for him, whom he taught, and whom he helped along in life.

"I owe my whole life to that store. Not only to Julius, but Leo, too," says Navy Cmdr. Al Bard, who came to work at Famous Clothing in 1955 at age 15. He lied about his age to get the job.

Horwitz and his wife, Alice, who works alongside her husband, brought everyone working at the store into their family, Bard, who now lives in Virginia Beach, Va., said.

"They were at my wedding. They were at my graduation, crying along with my mother," he said.

"I had no aspiration for any kind of success," Bard said. "It was the principles instilled by Julius, the store, that led me to the success I've had."

Bard oversaw construction and launching of the U.S.S. Monongahela and was its first captain. A plaque lies face-down on Horwitz' cluttered desk. The plaque notes that he is an honorary crew member of the Monongahela.

Other mementos lie about the little office in the back of the store, which is full of clothing racks and boxes of shirts, shoes, socks and slacks.

"I spent 50 years in this room and enjoyed every day of it. I enjoy my friends. I enjoy my customers because they are my friends," Horwitz said.



Leo Bensman (left) and Julius Horwitz, manager, Famous Clothing – May 5, 1966. (Charles Curtis / Duluth Herald) – more on this photo below

Times have changed the store. When old Central High School teemed with teen-agers, Famous had a remarkable trade in young men's clothing. Horwitz said he used to watch teen-agers shop to make sure his store was up on styles. Now, with the high school too far away to generate business, Famous counts on young men and executives, and on the regulars who still buy their heavy work clothes off the racks there.

"We've been prosperous. We developed a store with marvelous credibility. People know when we sell it it was the right goods at the right price," Horwitz said.

He was taught quality, he said, by his uncle, who used a magnifying glass to count the threads running each way in shirts the store was buying.

Horwitz fumes a little about how people today don't know quality and don't care. They are, he said, satisfied no matter what the quality or what the price. That, Horwitz said, results in inflation.

Up to three weeks ago, Horwitz had no intention of closing, he said. He had turned aside entreaties to sell the store because no one could buy it outright. But he sold the building, and with the construction of a new Lake Avenue Bridge, business had slowed down. "That thing's making me deaf," he said, waving toward the construction site.

"Enough is enough," he said.

But his attitude is still positive. He points to a creed that has been hanging on his office wall since the Depression. It tells the story of a very successful hot dog salesman who was blind. Told by his college-educated son that a depression is coming, the vendor cuts back on orders, trims advertising and stops hawking at the curb. Business falls. Sure enough, he tells his son, a depression is coming.

"I look at that a lot," Horwitz said. "You always have to look for opportunity."

He will have time once his goods are sold and he can close the store. He plans to travel but Duluth will still be his home.

"I enjoy being able to walk down the street and have people wave and say, 'Hello Julius,'" he said. "That's worth its weight in gold."

That's community.

Julius Horwitz died in Duluth in April 2001 at age 87.

The 1966 photo above includes some other interesting details.

Famous Clothing was located at 12 E. Superior St., the space now occupied by the Electric Fetus music store. To the west was the Bradley Building, which at the time housed KDAL (TV – and probably radio, too, I assume):



The Bradley Building was removed about the time that Lake Avenue was reconstructed and reconfigured for the bridge across Interstate 35. Here is a [link](#) to a photo and a little more information about the Bradley Building.

In addition to housing KDAL (now KDLH) for a time, the Bradley Building also played a role in the history of WDSE-TV. Here are some excerpts from a history posted on the station's [Web site](#):

"From 1964 to 1966, the station's offices were located in one room on the fourth floor of the Bradley Building in downtown Duluth. ... In 1968, WDSE moved to the former KDAL television studio space on the second floor of the Bradley Building. ...

In 1972 the Minnesota Department of Transportation announced plans to condemn the Bradley Building in order to make way for the extension of Interstate 35 through downtown Duluth. When Dr. Raymond Darland, then chancellor of the University of Minnesota Duluth offered the station a site on campus for a new building, the board gave their approval to make plans for a new facility."

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Warren H.

I used to shop there when I was a teenager back in the 70's. They always had the latest fashions from Levi's like the flared pants with cuffs! There was a picture of James Arness AKA Marshall Matt Dillon from TV's Gunsmoke taped on to the front of the counter by the cash register. It was signed "To Julius" When I asked about the picture, Julius said Arness comes to town to go duck hunting with him! It was great place to get some happening threads and I have fond memories.

January 27, 2010 at 12:13 am

Bill K.

I got to know Julius Horwitz after I got married. My wives' family were very good friends with Julius. When I read this article, I showed it to my wife and she started telling stories about Julius. One thing that I can say

for his is, "I never met a nice, kinder, more gentler man than Julius". We will always remember him. Oh, by the way, I just gave a "Famous Clothing" suit to Goodwill. I found it buried in the attic.

March 19, 2009 at 11:35 am

Barry Steinman

Julius Horwitz was my godfather...no, really, my real godfather.

I have several memories of him, his family, the store. Many of us having our Bar Mitzvas in the 50s got our Today, I Am A Man Suit from Famous. My brother, Duncan (East High grad, 1956 worked there briefly when he was a teen ager. My dad, Bradley Steinman, always bought his hats (all men wore hats then...even driving the car) there.

I can still hear the wooden floors squeek and see the interior of the store vividly.

Good to stumble on this story.

February 11, 2009 at 7:47 am

Rob A

My wife and I first met at Famous as they were getting ready for their going out of business sale in 1983.

Without Julius introducing us we never would have met! We were married in 1985 and are still happily married today!

January 14, 2009 at 2:31 pm

Becky

Right after this store closed and before the Fetus my dad opened a tattoo shop there, Shadowmasters. I spent a lot of my time there with my family and once my mother put her hand through the plate glass door trying to find me. I was playing hide and seek. I noticed that in the history of that building, as told by the site that is linked in this Attic article, that his shop was not mentioned. So I figured I'd get it in there.

January 13, 2009 at 3:50 pm

Dennis Int'l Falls

Nice to read about the Famous Clothing store. That area was the focal point of downtown Duluth at one time. Went in there many times to see my old friend Al Bard {Butch} Haven't seen him since the early 60's. He really appreciate all the support he got from the Famous Clothing Store. I bought a few things there as well as visiting.

January 12, 2009 at 12:05 pm

Danny G

Famous Clothing? Never heard of it.

BAH HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA

January 11, 2009 at 10:27 pm

Kathie

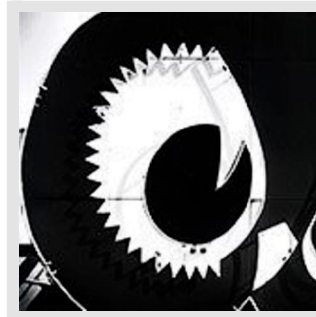
When he was in high school (Central), my husband bought all of his clothes at Famous. He still had some of them when we got married and I used to tease him about his pink shirts. He swore they were high style back

then and that's why he shopped at Famous Clothing.

January 11, 2009 at 4:04 am

Comments are closed.

ABOUT



On the third floor of the News Tribune building, in a back room with warped wooden floors, glass-block windows and just a bit of dust, sit rows of file cabinets stuffed with photos, clippings and rolls of microfilm documenting the history of Duluth, Superior, the Northland and beyond.

On this blog we'll feature some of these items -- sometimes related to a current news story, more often at random.

The News Tribune attic has microfilm going back to the start of the various predecessors of the News Tribune; indexed files of clippings going back to the 1960s; and indexed files of photos mainly from the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s.

More recent stories and photos are accessible in electronic archives.

If you have questions, send an e-mail to akrueger@duluthnews.com.



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