

This recording is an interview with Terry Brine, retired owner of Copp's Shoes and property owner on Columbia Street. The shoe store was a family business that existed for more than 80 years on Columbia Street. The shoe store closed in 2012 and the building was destroyed in a fire in 2013. The main themes of the interview are the family business, the retail and entertainment history of Columbia Street as well as retail changes in Metro Vancouver.

Interviewer: Michelle La & Bailey Garden

Date: August 22, 2014

Date Range: 1970s – present. Earlier periods are mentioned briefly (from 1911).

Sound recording length: 01:12:53

Terry Brine was born in New Westminster and grew up in Burnaby. He studied education at the university and upon graduation joined the successful family business. He was the third manager of this family business after his father and grandfather. The store existed for more than 100 years at its origin location. Terry shares his experience about the success, decline and revitalization of Columbia Street from its heyday as the "Miracle Mile" of the region until today. The interview provides information about the changes in the retail structure of New Westminster, the local business community and the local shopping and entertainment habits. Moreover, he shares his views about the city's waterfront and its relation to the downtown area.

Section 00:00 – 01:38

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the location of the family business (Copp's Shoes) and the property that he co-owns on the corner of Columbia and Mackenzie Streets. He worked in the store from 1971 to 2012. He succeeded his father and grandfather in running the business.

Section 01:39 – 04:40

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about his childhood and youth when visiting his grandfather's shoe store on Saturdays and also helping and cleaning on busy days as well as working there on vacations from high school. The store serviced customers of all ages. Many of the customers started as young and continued to shop there throughout their lives. When he started working in the 1970s there were about 6-7 shoe stores on Columbia Street and they closed down with the development of the shopping malls. In the last 2 years in operation they were the only shoe store on the strip.

Section 04:41- 07:52

In this portion of the interview, Terry tells how his grandfather purchased the store in 1925. It was a speciality shoe store, which had first opened in 1911. Terry talks about the 1920s when Columbia Street was the main retail centre for the Fraser Valley. He describes Columbia Street as a busy retail and entertainment center which was full of people especially during the weekends. The change in Columbia Street started in the 1960s with the opening of the Lougheed Shopping Mall. The 1990s was a really harsh time for retail on Columbia street. Despite the changes the family business survived and he is happy with the retail revitalization in the downtown area.

Section 07:53- 11:26

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about Columbia Street's heyday. The businesses which were located in those 5-6 blocks were very successful until the late 1960s. Terry states that after that the retail changed and moved to the suburbs, his business was still very busy and he was fortunate. Since the mid-1970s many businesses closed down and vacancies started to appear on the street. Terry thinks that in the next 15 years we will see Columbia Street very successful again with more people moving to live in downtown.

Section 11:27- 18:23

In this portion of the interview, Terry discuss about why he thinks that his store lasted so long. He mentions that it was mostly because the continuity of it for almost 80 years everyday with his family managing it successfully and coming there every day. Good customer service created a strong customers base through the years, which kept coming back for generations. Owning the building was also a major factor in the continuity. His grandfather bought half of the building in the 1920s. The other half was owned by the Lewis family.

Section 18:23- 22:22

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the types customers through the years. Longshoremen who came to buy boots were an important part of the customer base. He also mentions that crewmen from the ships came to the store.

Section 22:23- 23: 43

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the Royal City Cafe, which was next door. There were not a lot of chains restaurants, and the cafe was very successful.

Section 23: 44- 28:26

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the business community along Colombia St. Mentions that in the 1980s and 1990s it was a strong business community, everybody knew one another. They had the Downtown New Westminster Business Association before the BIA began. They put together money for advertising and were part of the group which pushed to build the parkade in the 1950s. Terry mentions the impending demolition of the parkade and proposed Larco development. He states that the Downtown New Westminster Business Association was very important and effective for the businesses there. He thinks that the current BIA is less effective because there is less involvement of the local businesses. Moreover, the business ownership has changed. The majority of the advertisements for the store were in the Colombian newspaper, some of them were joint with other stores.

Section 28:27- 33:05

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about his relationships with other establishments on the street. He mentions Gary Lobel from Galo Shoe Repair who was his tenant and came in the late 1960s and had old fashioned and eclectic shoe repair shop. He states that the Galo Shoe Repair was a social spot.

Section 33:06- 36:57

In this portion of the interview, Terry tells about tenants in his property. Among the tenants there were: on Colombia St., Galo, a barber, insurance agency, a lawyer and a dentist; on Front St., a

few antiques stores, an eclectic “junk” store, and a deli. He mentions that they had few barbers there from the 1920s.

Section 36:58- 41:53

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the Golden Mile and that it was very competitive to rent a business on Columbia Street until the mid-1970s. He states that for business owners, it was crucial to be on the street in order to be successful. Mentions a big and successful business owner who had a building on the street. Terry thinks that the development of the suburban shopping malls was the main reason for the friction and the decline of Columbia Street and later other retail developments in the region such as big box stores. He discusses current shopping patterns and the importance of competitive pricing.

Section 41:54- 47:33

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the changes in New Westminster waterfront, the development of the shipping industry, the opening of Fraser Surrey docks. He states that the big change on the waterfront came when Pacific Coast Terminals closed their operation and it opened the waterfront to everybody. He also mentions the rail as a barrier to the waterfront. The closing of PCT terminals affected the retail on Columbia Street because all of the workers from the terminals and docks came to buy things on Columbia St. At the end of the 1990s the business climate was not so good and there were not as many residents as today.

Section 47:34- 55:46

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the opening of Westminster Quay Market and the opening of the Skytrain. When it was first opened they had markets in there such as meat market, lots of small businesses (about 100 businesses) and restaurants. He states that the opening of the Skytrain stations in 1986 was good and enables to get faster to downtown Vancouver. He thinks that for New Westminster's residents going downtown means going to New Westminster's downtown, while for residents in the rest of the region going downtown means going to downtown Vancouver.

Section 55:47- 59:43

In this portion of the interview, Terry speaks about the legacy of his store to Columbia Street and he is very proud of being a part of this successful business, in the city. He mentions the number of employees on his store and how the number changed over the years.

Section 59:44- 1:03:02

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the working hours of the store and the working hours of other businesses in downtown. Some businesses like barber shops were closed on Mondays, other were closed on Wednesday afternoons (during the 1960s and 1970s). Describes Saturday night as a big shopping night on Columbia Street, and shops were open until 9pm.

Section 1:03:03- 1:05:09

In this portion of the interview, Terry talks about the area being a set for movies and the film industry along Columbia Street. Describes that big movies were filmed there and Robin Williams was there and also visited his store.

Section 1:05:10- 1:12:53

In this portion of the interview, Terry describes the relationships of the businesses with the City of New Westminster. He describes very good and supportive relationships. Discuss some speciality retail clusters such as the bridal stores. He states that when there were a number of vacancies in the street they attracted businesses, which need large space and cheap rent such as bridal shops. Mentions that when a type of businesses settles in the area it attracts others from the same type. Describes his perspective about the structure of retail in the street and elaborates on the department stores. Thinks that now the retail is not so strong and hopefully will recover. He still feels strong connections to downtown New Westminster.