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Interview with
NATHAN DONSKY
September 11, 1982

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Floyd Jenkins

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Approved: Nathan Donsky
(Signature)

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Business Oral History Collection

Nathan Donsky

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: September 11, 1982

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is September 11, 1982. I am talking to Nathan Donsky at his home at the Athena apartments on Northwest Highway in Dallas, Texas. Mr. Donsky started Nathan's Jewelers in San Angelo 40 some-odd years ago.

Mr. Donsky: Actually I started the Nathan's Jewelers in 1938. But I was in the jewelry business 52 years. I started in 1930 in a pawn shop called Goren and Donsky.

Dr. Jenkins: So you founded Nathan's Jewelers in San Angelo, you say?

Mr. Donsky: In San Angelo, Texas. Also Brownwood ten years later. Brownwood was formed in 1940.

Dr. Jenkins: Okay, we will get to that. You are presently associated with Sterling Jewelers.

Mr. Donsky: I am one of the owners together with two brothers, Ervin Donsky, who is the controlling stockholder, and my brother Abe Donsky, who operates Houston Jewellery and Distributing Company. We have at the present time three stores in Dallas: one in Richardson, which is a new store on Campbell

Road and one on Northwest Highway, and one downtown in the Mercantile Building. We have two stores in Houston: one on Westheimer and one downtown on Milam.

Jenkins: Let's get you to go back and talk family first. Give us what knowledge you have of your parents, even your grandparents, what you know about them, and what kind of life they led, and how it kind of brought you into being. And then we will pick up and grow you up from there.

Donsky: My father came to New York before 1884, as September 17, 1884 is when he received his citizenship papers. He married in New York and had a daughter named Becky who later married Louis Lynn. His wife died and he moved to Dallas about 1896 with his daughter Becky. He later brought over three brothers and a sister. My mother came from Poland as a very young girl and had three sisters living in Dallas. She met my father and they married in Dallas about 1898 and in 1901 my oldest brother Louis was born and they had eight more children; three boys, me, Abe and Ervin, and five girls; Freda, Sara, Bess, Ida and Lottie. The oldest was a boy and the youngest a boy and each boy was born five years apart so in fifteen years they had nine children. At the present time all are living, except sister Lottie is deceased. We do not have any information on our grandparents as they were deceased when I was born. My mother also had one brother who remained in Poland and she was unable to find out anything about him. I graduated from Cumberland Hill Grammar School which is

on North Akard and is the home of Sedco Oil Company. In 1921 our family moved to 1501 Sanger Avenue in South Dallas so I rode a bicycle from South Dallas to Cumberland Hill for about 3 months so I could graduate from Cumberland Hill Grammar School.

Louis married Annie Spiritas whose previous husband died and she was left with four children and they had a daughter, Helen. My sister, Freda, married Sam Curtis and they had no children. My sister, Sara, married Syd Harvit and they had no children. My sister, Bess, married Harry L. Kaplan and they had two daughters and a son.

My sister, Ida, married Lou Saks and they had a daughter and a son.

My sister, Lottie, married R. B. Slaton and they had a daughter and two sons.

My brother, Abe, married Margaret Sollinger and they had three daughters.

My brother, Ervin, married Frances Cohen and they had two daughters and two sons.

My father was in the moving and transfer business. In other words he had these two large wagons with two teams of horses and also a moving van. He did moving. It was called the Independent Transfer Company. He hauled produce from the trains to the produce houses, and I used to keep his books. Now my older brother, Louis, worked with him. My father wouldn't let me get on the van. He was a very hard

worker. Now everything that I have ever done in my life I can contribute to my parents, my mother and my father. They were both very, very charitable. What charity my wife and I have done through our lifetime we learned from them and her parents. I find that if someone enjoys doing certain things, it is much easier to give charity, because you look at it as an investment. I remember very distinctly, even when I would send money home to help, that in the checks that my mother wrote there would be checks to Father Flanagan's Boys Ranch and other different organizations. No stranger was ever turned away from our house for food. They were always welcomed. She had these little cans they called it "pushkies," that they put money into for different charities and institutions. My mother was very religious. She was orthodox and served to the fullest extent the orthodox religion. My father had to work, so he wasn't as religious as my mother was. But one thing about it, they taught us to always tell the truth regardless of what it was.

Jenkins: Do you remember anything about your grandparents' vocation at all?

Donsky: No, I don't. I am sorry that we didn't have the pleasure as they were deceased before I was born. The only thing that I remember them telling about was my mother's father coming over here, and he was a very well learned man. He was unusually remarkable. I think I get my height from my grandfather, because he was tall. My mother was short.

My father was slender and not too tall. I am named after my mother's father.

Jenkins: You were born here?

Donsky: I was born here in Dallas at 2403 Caroline Street, and I still remember my phone number was Main-1898. This is in the neighborhood of Cedar Springs, Alamo. When my parents moved to 1501 Sanger over in South Dallas, I rode a bicycle the last term of school from south Dallas to Cumberland Hill so that I wouldn't transfer. I wanted to graduate from Cumberland Hill. I graduated from Forest in 1925. I sold newspapers from the time I was 6 years old. I remember distinctly that they had three daily papers called the Dallas Dispatch, the Times Herald, and the Journal. They cost half a cent apiece and they sold for a penny apiece. And of course on Sunday they cost three cents and they sold for a nickel. I had my own route around the courthouse and the county jail. I remember I had one old man, Judge Muse, that used to buy a Saturday paper from me and give me a dime. Well, a dime in those days was a lot of money, because for 15¢ we could buy milk and a piece of pie or a dozen tamales for 15¢. Then, besides that, we worked at the baseball park. We started out selling cigars, cigarettes, gum. And then you got promoted to selling peanuts and then soda water.

Jenkins: What was the baseball team then?

Donsky: It was at the old Gardner Park. Jess Ham owned the ball

club, and later on Ike Sabolotsky bought it, and then Julius Schepps purchased it later. And the Levine boys had the concessions. And I remember when the old Gardner Park burned. Charlie Maxwell that year had cold drinks concessions together with the Coca Cola Company. And the Levine boys had the cushion concessions.

Jenkins: Where was Gardner Park?

Donsky: It was in Oak Cliff. It was the old original ball park next to the skating rink. It was just across the viaduct.

Jenkins: Okay, I remember.

Donsky: So they had a fire, and I was down there trying to recover the cushions for the Levine boys. It was a wood stand, and I saw the fire. So I dropped the cushions, and I barely got out. I remember distinctly. Charlie Maxwell was married to a very beautiful woman. She dropped some nickels, and she was collecting nickels on the floor, and he had to push her out in order to get her out of there. We barely did get out by the time the whole thing caved in, because it was built from the lower level, it was built all the way up. I also worked at the football games. They used to have an 18,000 stadium at the fair, and I would sell football programs. In those days we didn't sell bottled drinks at football games, we would have lemonade that they made. I would sell the lemonade and also peanuts. At night they had fireworks and had that colliseum, and we would sell cushions up in the stands.

Jenkins: What football was it, high school, college?

Donsky: It was college football. SMU was very popular in those days. After I graduated from high school. . .

Jenkins: Let's not get you out of high school too quick. Did you get involved in anything in high school much other than going to school?

Donsky: I was a catcher on a baseball team for Forest Avenue High School, but I never did letter. I was about a third string catcher. My picture was in the annual. I was working all the time, so I didn't have too much time doing anything. And getting back in here when I was a child, when we lived in north Dallas we had a cow. I used to take the cow to the pasture before I went to school. Then I had to go to Hebrew school after school until I was 13 (Bar Mitzvah).

Jenkins: Did you do the milking?

Donsky: No, I didn't do the milking, but I did bring the cow home. Of course, we were rough kids. I even caddied one time at the Dallas Country Club for 75¢. That was too slow for us. We didn't try it anymore. And we were boys that were very active in the things we did. We used to have our own ball games. I used to catch. I was on the Sam Diesterbach baseball team, and we used to play in all of the small towns. I was the catcher. We would go to these little towns for advertising purposes. We all had uniforms.

Jenkins: I remember the name Sam Disterbach.. What was that?

Donsky: That was a department store, a clothing store, up in east Dallas. It was a big one years back.

Jenkins: I remember the name.

Donsky: For instance we would go to Seagoville and different towns. I remember one time one old country boy got up and said, "Please don't hit me," and he hit the ball, and it is still going. So it was a lot of activity.

Jenkins: You had a cow, did you have a garden and chickens or anything like that?

Donsky: Yes, we had chickens. No garden. The little house that we had we paid \$14 a month rent. It was next to the Rosenthal Grocery. I grew up with Ben H. Rosenthal, Sr., and we went through grammar school together. Then when we moved to south Dallas he went to Bryan and I went to Forest. My youngest sister, Lottie, died about 10 years of age.

Jenkins: Are all of the rest of them living?

Donsky: All the rest of them are living and are in good health. I graduated from Forest Avenue High School in 1925 and since I could not afford to go to college I took a secretarial course from Buford Business College and my first job was secretary to Colonel Alvin M. Owsley who previously had been National Commander of American Legion and later in life was Foreign Minister to Romania. He was married to Lucy Ball of Ball Fruit Jar covers in Muncie, Indiana. I

used to stay at his home in Oak Cliff in Kessler Park, at times while he was away. I rode the street car to where it stopped and then had to walk over a mile to his home.

Colonel Alvin M. Owsley was a partner in the firm Burgess, Owsley, Story & Stewart. They were prominent attorneys.

Robert G. Story later handled the Nuremberg trial after World War II.

Jenkins: Let me interject here that we do, at North Texas, have the papers of the Owsley's and the Ball's.

Donsky: Yes. So he was very nice and courteous. I remember when I approached him on the job he dictated four letters to me. Of course I made mistakes in the letters, and he hired me. He told me that this wasn't the type of job I belonged in. He said I belonged in the mercantile business. I would come to work, and he would go to luncheons for hours and make speeches. He was called the silver tongued orator of Texas. Then he would go away for the summer for three months, and I was left there at the office with nothing to do. I could read the writing on the wall. So I talked to him one day. I noticed where they had an ad in the paper, a cotton broker had an ad, for a secretary. He told me he'd help me with it, and I answered the ad, and I got the job. Now prior to that I noticed that Red Grange was coming to Dallas for the first professional football team. It had to be in 1926. He contacted Red Grange's promoters, and

he got me the program concession. So I went around trying to sell ads, and I couldn't sell any ads. I finally sold a man by the name of Morris Goldman an ad on the back of the program for \$12.50. I printed the programs, and it so happened that that day was rainy, and I just about broke even on the sale of the programs. But it was an experience. This was held at the fair grounds at the old stadium that had a capacity of 18,000. That is where the Texas and Vanderbilt games were played. And the people at these games climbed over the fence to get into the game, because they couldn't accommodate the crowd. Then I went to work for Franz Brass. He used to go up to the Dallas Athletic Club and get drunk and then call in orders. We sold cotton all over the world. He would receive a commission on the sale, and it was a very lucrative business. We had two men there, the other secretary and I. We would take it down so that we could double check. But when we made a commitment overseas, the cable, we had to live with it. So while I had this job I was making \$140 a month, which was considerably more than I previously made with Colonel Owsley, I belonged to a club called FHH. And every Sunday we had a meeting, and we shot dice. We would gamble. When you had to win, you always lost. So I ended up losing every Sunday. Before I knew it I owed the Pacific Finance Company money that I had borrowed. I owed for clothes at Norfolk Clothiers. Of course I was helping out

at home, and I was giving part of my money at home because a lot of the younger ones were still going to school.

Jenkins: About what year are we now?

Donsky: We are in the year of 1926 and early part of '27. So my father was walking home with a very close friend of his, Jake Donosky, who is the father of Meyer M. Donosky, and he was telling that I was going to go to San Angelo in the concession business. So Mr. Donosky asked him, "Where is he going to get the money?" It so happened that I had two wealthy uncles, Ruby Robinson and Jacob Winer. The Winer's were in the ladies ready-to-wear business on Elm Street and very well fixed. But I wouldn't go ask either one of them. I went to the bank, and the bank wouldn't let me have the money. They said that if I could get my two uncles to guarantee the note, they would loan it. So as I mentioned before, my father was walking home with Jake Donosky. So the old man tells his son about it. Unsolicited, the son calls me up to his office. In those days Meyer was in the freight business. He had a service where people would turn over their freight bills, and he would check them, and he would get part of the refund. Later he was treasurer of the Dallas Morning News. He was a very successful business man. He always considered me a relative, cousins, because there was a very close friendship with my father and their parents. He called me into his office, and asked me how much money I needed. I was ashamed to tell him \$500,

and I said, "\$250." He said to go to the bank and get a note, and he would sign it. Then Morris Goldman, who had this Van Winkle newsstand, who was a very good friend of mine and always liked me, I went to him and he loaned me \$250. Then Rabbi Abramowitz, who was the Rabbi of the congregation of Agudasachim. When he first came to Dallas he ate at our house because our house was one of the strictly kosher houses in Dallas before he brought his wife over. And he loaned me money. And Mrs. Friedman, who was a neighbor across the street, she loaned me \$75. My sister loaned me money, Freda. In fact when I was going to Buford Business College and I didn't have time to work or a chance to do anything or go to college, my sister Freda worked at A. Harris and Company and everytime I would run short of funds, I would ask her to loan me, and she would say, "No, here, I will give it to you." She would give me money. So different ones helped me. Then I took a partner in, a fellow by the name of Abie Ray. He had lived in San Angelo and had moved to Dallas. I took him in as partners with me, and we went to San Angelo. We started Ray Don concessions.

Jenkins: How much money did you accumulate to get out there?

Donsky: It took \$1,000 to put in to buy the concession. So we raised the \$1,000, and then we raised extra money, several hundred dollars extra, to live on. I got to San Angelo,

I went to the Coca Cola Bottling Company. Joe Sanger was just getting ready to buy out the Coca Cola Company from Mr. Walker, and I sold him an ad on the back of the cushion for \$150, which paid for half of the price of the cushions. Then I took a long piece of cardboard, and I went around and sold ads on a baseball program, because on one side we would have the San Angelo team, and on the other side the visiting team. This program would last for the whole year. And then they built a new ballpark, and we had the concession stand. We sold peanuts and soda water and rented cushions. We would buy several hundred pounds of peanuts at a time, and I would have these boys sack them. I had all of these little boys, youngsters. Some of them didn't know how to make change. And in fact Nub Jones, now owner of S & Q Clothiers, a furnishing store in Midland and Odessa, was one of them. There are quite a number of boys. Woodrow Jackson, who is the Electric Service Company. Ben Weinberg was one of those, who now lives in Dallas. He handled the cushions for me. Louie Bradley, who is now retired from the Internal Revenue Service, who we called Ug, who reminds me of Mrs. Roosevelt. He had the same kind of chin. Very playful, very good worker. And quite a number of others, Dr. Courteon. Dan Kleinman, that worked for me during these concessions. Besides the baseball we also had the concession at the wrestling matches. We also had the rodeos, different events. In fact one year I

bought the concessions at the rodeo, we also had a restaurant and other different activities at the rodeo and Brady Jubilee.

Jenkins: About what year are we talking about now?

Donsky: We are talking about 1928 and early '29. And then, as I said, I bought out my partner. The following year the concession played out. The baseball league broke up. So I went to Forsan, Texas, which is between San Angelo and Big Spring, and I ran a drygoods store for Sam Bernstein, who also had a store in Iraan, Texas. I had to get off the highway and walk about 2 miles to get to the town. I lived in back of the store and opened the store at 5 o'clock in the morning to sell the oil drillers gloves and other clothes. There was a restaurant nextdoor. And if you will pardon the expression, the privy was outside. I would light a coal stove at 5 o'clock in the morning and stayed open until 11 o'clock at night seven days a week, Sundays also. For awhile Mrs. Bernstein would come and stay, and I would drive to Big Spring to the bank for the deposit. There were no banks in Forsan. No activities going on. Every once in a while they would have a dance in the town.

Jenkins: How big a town was Forsan?

Donsky: A few hundred. There was a Post Office. To use the telephone you had to go to the telephone office. I made \$40.00 a week.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Donsky: San Angelo Telephone company had a telephone office. The laundry and cleaners would come in and pick up the laundry. There was a grocery store. There were two drygoods stores and a furniture store and a hardware. There was very little. This was about the tailend of Forsan, which is still active. Incidentally they have the best schools, a terrific school system in Forsan. My parents drove down from Dallas to see me. When my mother and father saw the way I lived, they were very unhappy. My mother started crying, so I moved. I had the opportunity to go to Hobbs, New Mexico. I moved to Hobbs, New Mexico, and together with another fellow I ran a store there. When we moved there, the streets weren't paved. It was a wide open town. There was gambling on the front street, and on the back street was the red light district. We were open from early in the morning until late at night, Sundays also. We slept on a cot in the back of the store. And this man, Sam Schmeerman, he and his wife had three daughters, lived in the back of the store. He borrowed the money from the bank to open the store. And every month he would send in thousands of dollars to Denver. He was originally from Denver. The store did a tremendous business in khakis and pants in the oil town. And I would go out to the oil fields to solicit their business. It was called the Golden Arrow. And the man couldn't read or write a word of

English, but he knew how to handle money.

Jenkins: What was his language, Spanish?

Donsky: No, Jewish.

Jenkins: And he spoke what?

Donsky: He spoke English, but he couldn't read or write it.

Jenkins: I see.

Donsky: And then there were hot checks. We would have to watch out for hot checks. I would catch some of them. I made \$50 a week. During the Passover holidays I decided to take his girls, and I took his three daughters and his wife and his car and drove to Dallas and spent the Passover. My parents fed them and they lived at the house. Of course the girls were young, and they messed up the house. And then when I drove back I was docked for the week I was gone. This gives an illustration of how not to treat people. I got a pair of pajamas for Christmas and no extra consideration. Then the business started getting a little duller, so I decided to go back to Dallas and go into secretarial work.

Jenkins: About what year are we now?

Donsky: This was in 1930.

Jenkins: The clouds were hovering then.

Donsky: And having had the cushions at San Angelo, I decided to go to San Angelo and see. When I arrived in San Angelo, I had previously made a lot of friends, and as I said my partner and I had sold Republic National Life Insurance

and decided to give it up. In fact I bought policy No. 41 which I still have, for \$2,500. You received $\frac{1}{2}$ a share of stock for every \$2,500 policy, and I think I ended up with about 139 shares of stock which is worth more money, several times, what the policy was. We always used the sample of what Southland Life did and Southwestern Life did. I had the cushions in San Angelo. And coming back it so happened that I had a cousin living here named Mrs. Abe Ray, Freda. She was Freda Winer Ray, who was very good to me while we were in the concession business. She had two daughters, Charlotte and Evelyn. They had a store and they lived in the back of the store. Later on they built a nice home. So she suggested that there was a fellow, Max Goren, who had a pawn shop and was partners with Harry Goltz. Max Goren furnished the money and Harry Goltz did the work. And everytime they would sell something, they would split the profit. They would sell second-hand guns, jewelry and clothing. It was a very poor organization. It was on Concho Street, and it was worth \$4,600. So this cousin of mine, Freda, told Mr. Goren that if he could get me to go in partners with him, that he would have it made. So I was propositioned, and he also had a daughter named Gladys, who I had dated. My cousin talked to her father who was visiting there, Jacob Weiner, and he loaned me \$500. I paid down the \$500 and went partners with Max Goren. We moved the pawn shop over next to a barber shop on

South Chadbourne Street. We had second-hand suits, guns and a little jewelry. The first year we made \$1,376. We each drew \$30 a week out of the business as salary, of which I put \$10 a week back into the business to pay off my share. And on Sundays I promoted a colored baseball game. I would make \$100 to \$150. I had the cushions, peanuts and the cold drinks concession. That is how I was able to continue to send money home to help at home. My parents didn't know at times how broke I was. From the concession business, I previously told you that I also paid off all of the debts that I owed in less than three months from the time I left Dallas. If I didn't mention it I am mentioning it now. I paid everybody off while I was still in partnership. But on this concession, on Sundays we would run that, and then I would have the rodeo and race meets, I would have that concession. I would take a truck with the cushions and I would go to the Brady Jubilee. I would buy the cold drink concession for a couple of hundred dollars, and I would go down there and I made \$500 during the July 3rd, 4th, and 5th. In order to have my partner, Max Goren, satisfied, I would give the business half of the profit of which half belonged to me, and then I would keep the other half. I had also rodeos and different things around. They had motorcycle hill climbing. They had wrestling matches that

continued on and different events. I also had the Rainbow Casino. They had a dance hall that we had concessions there at night; before my partner and I dissolved we had that. If they had a race meet somewhere, I took cushions out there and cold drinks.

Jenkins: You would rent cushions?

Donsky: No, the cushions belonged to me. These were our cushions that I bought and had an ad on the back of them for the Coca Cola Company. I had 1,000 cushions. The first cushions that San Angelo has ever seen. We were renting them out to people for a dime.

Jenkins: A dime, okay, that is what I was after.

Donsky: So I would rent the cushions. I would stand in front of a ballgame with cushions, and I would show my employees how to sell cushions. So if a lady walked in I would slip a cushion under her arm and I would say to him, "20¢, please." And he was embarrassed. So I would sell cushions and show my employees how cushions were sold. My brother Abe and Max Einhorn went into the concession business in Corpus Christi about '33, '34 or '35 and bought 1,000 cushions and when the league went broke they sent the cushions to me at San Angelo as the first ones I had were beginning to tear and so these came in handy. This was while I was in partnership at the pawn shop with Max Goren. On Sunday it was phenomenal. San Angelo at the time was wide open, gambling and red light districts,

during the time that my partner and I were there. Then when I had the rodeo, a friend of mine by the name of Cub Deal, turned over the concessions for the rodeo to me. I would give them 40% of the profit and 60% I would keep. So I would bring them a list of how much I had in cases of soda water and how many sacks of peanuts to show how we checked out. He said, "That's not necessary." I also had cold drinks, peanuts and cushion concessions at football games at High School. I gave the school 40% of the profit and I kept 60%. Max Goren and I were in business for 7 years. We weren't making anything because Max didn't want to purchase anything, and I would have to buy at night merchandise to sell. I had a friend of mine who taught me my Masonry, Leon Fine, who is now deceased and who was responsible for my success. He bought a building, 202 S. Chadbourne, up the street called the Riverside Cafe. He went in and remodeled it. He remodeled it like a drygoods store because in those days everybody had a little drygoods store. So he had a drygoods store himself called The Leader. Then we took a little mirror and we raised it up so the bottom of the window would be eye level for jewelry so that we could put jewelry in. And the first year I was in business, which I went in with Goren in '30, and I opened Nathan's in '38. We dissolved our partnership in '37. So we split the inventory. I gave him the pawn goods. We had the gifts and

guitar. I gave him the gifts and guitar. We had the Wheary luggage. I took the Wheary luggage, and I took the jewelry. So we split the jewelry over my half, and I put it in the trunk. As I said, Leon Fine built this building. He went to the bank, and he told the First National Bank that what he was good for, I was good for. So then I had West Texas Lumber Company build me fixtures. I had these little wall cases. I had Otto Coever in Dallas build me the show cases. We had the first parquet floor put in, which is still there. We opened up, and I had the formal opening on February 14, which was brother Abe Donsky's first anniversary. He and Margaret came there for the anniversary of the opening of Nathan's Jewelers in 1938. Now prior, when I ran the concessions, the concessions were run under the name Nathan's. Goren and Donsky was the name of the pawn shop store after I paid out my half. And one of the thrilling days of my life, we paid \$6 for a board that was painted "Goren and Donsky" that was in front of the building. And when I was paid off my half, that was when we changed the name. He wouldn't change the name until we paid off the half. When I bought in it was called Max Goren's Pawn Shop.

Jenkins: And you changed it to . . .

Donsky: In 1935 to Goren & Donsky. I am 52 years in business. Not Nathan's. Then, of course, when I opened Nathan's, the first year we did more business than he and I had ever

thought of doing in the several years, several times.

Jenkins: And you opened Nathan's in . . .

Donsky: '38. And I sold everybody on credit. The girls that worked in the houses of ill repute were good customers. There were whorehouses around there, everybody. In those days the margin of profit was tremendous. There was no tax. A watch sold for what it sells for today, but the cost was very little. In other words your margin was fantastic. So I took high margin profits.

Jenkins: What kind of margin?

Donsky: Some watches that would cost \$19.95 sold for \$65.00. I would sell it for 50¢ down and 50¢ a week. We would take items of something that would sell for \$9.95 that cost us \$10.95 and let them pay 50¢ a week in order to get the accounts on the books. On Saturday we would collect \$700. I had three employees. Herbie Edenbaum who has been with me all these years and is now in Temple, Texas, is sick. I paid him \$18 a week. He was a salesman. I had Hez Lott, a colored man, for \$12. I had Mrs. Fomby, for \$12 a week. During the time I ran Goren & Donsky Pawn Shop I had corresponded with R. B. Slaton about different promotions he ran for Raskin's of Oklahoma City and here again fate played an important part as later when he was employed by Zales in Dallas my sister Lottie happened to walk into Zales and in a short period of time they married and then when we opened the 309 Center Ave. store we hired him to

manage the store and later my brother Ervin trained under him to learn the jewelry business and my sister Ida also worked with him in Brownwood. His heavy purchases the first year were responsible for us getting plenty of jewelry and watches due to it being based on previous year's purchases.

Herbie Edenbaum started working in San Angelo the day Nathan's opened in 1938 and then went into the service. He returned after the war, ran the Brownwood store and worked a little while in Odessa and Big Spring, then left to be with his parents in Fort Worth while his father was ill. Then he worked for Zales, and then April 1, 1953 he returned to San Angelo and April 1, 1978 he became a member of the 25 year club. He has been in ill health for a number of years and several years ago he entered Veterans Hospital in Temple, Texas where he is now staying. He still draws an annual salary from Nathan's, which is put aside for his daughter Sherry. He will also receive \$500.00 each time someone joins the 25 year club.

So I had \$42 a week expense. \$200 a month rent. A watch that sold for \$37.50 cost \$13.95. In other words we would buy certain items at a big margin of profit value. Diamonds didn't have that kind of profit. In other words you had a realistic media of 50% profit. Then I would buy rings already made up. So I would sign notes. In those days you

would buy \$10,000 in watches, you would sign notes at 10 notes payable over a period of time. And I never renewed a note in my life, and I never renewed a note at a bank. I would go to another bank and borrow the money to pay this bank. I bought my show case fixtures, and I paid it out \$50 a month. Everything was paid out. Like I said, this was in 1938, business was going good. I had a lot of friends. Then as the business expanded in 1938 I had a man working for me, Bobo Ely. I wanted to go back to FHH events in Dallas, and he wanted to go to Dallas New Year's. So I let him go. I didn't have anyplace to go, so in November I went to Sweetwater to an affair. It was a Jewish affair that they had there. I saw someone that I liked very much. So New Year's they were going to have a dance in Abilene. So I borrowed an old car from Leon Fine and drove to Abilene. Leon taught me my Masonry, and he spoke with a little brogue. I delivered lectures and I did it with a brogue.

Jenkins: Is that right? You are talking about being a Mason?

Donsky: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay.

Donsky: So I drove to Abilene, and I had a date with somebody else. In the meantime my wife's niece called me. My wife had broken up with the fellow that she was going with in Dallas, and her brothers had gone to New Orleans to a football game, and her mother was visiting in Abilene. She had a sister in Abilene, and she was visiting in Abilene. So my niece

called me and asked me to take her as a date. I said, "I already have a date." As I walked in New Year's Eve, it was late, my wife was walking down the stairs. And I said to her, "You don't belong here." She said, "No, and I am not going to be here long." They had a breakfast that morning after the dance, and I asked her for a date. Someone had an early morning breakfast. She said, "If you take my mother." I said, "Okay, I will take your mother." So I went in there, and I danced with her. In those days they had the dances at the Hilton Hotel. They had the chairs all the way around, and the families were sitting around there. I was already in business in San Angelo for one year, and some people knew me, and they said, "Oh, he is a wonderful man, etc." I fell in love with her mother, and her mother fell in love with me. My wife had flown there from Ft. Worth on a plane. Of course we went to the breakfast. Her niece ran off to get married that night after this affair, with Leonard Goldblatt. And her mother didn't like the boy, didn't approve of him, but they ran off and got married. So naturally my wife and my mother-in-law knew about it, and they were waiting for a telegram. So the next morning I got up early in the morning. And one thing about it, this is terrible, but I can't help it, the first thing I look at a woman I look at her legs.

Jenkins: That is not a bad place to start.

Donsky: No. I went with a girl that had large legs and I never

dated her again. So I wanted to see what she looked like in the morning. Also I went early in the morning, and I rang the doorbell. I hollered, "Western Union." She answered the doorbell and invited me in. I said, "I just want to see what you looked like in the morning." There was a couple there at this affair, that went to Chicago the next morning. Her sister lived in Chicago, my wife's sister. They told her sister that Babe, my wife, had met a fellow that she was going to marry. It was just that night. And another part that is important, the fellow that worked for me from Dallas had a picture, my wife says, in his apartment which I don't remember. I lived at the hotel, and he stayed with me. She was engaged to him, and they broke up. Of course when we married he didn't stay there long. He left right after we married. I wouldn't let her go home on the plane. I made her go home on the train. I started out from Abilene and ended up in Sweetwater. I took the wrong turn, I was so nervous. Then I got home, and I called her. I don't know if it was that day or several days later that I asked her to marry me. I sent my mother and my sisters over to look her over and my mother thought she was too young for me. You see my wife is 11 years younger than me. I sent her a set of rawhide luggage and a diamond ring. So I said, "Well, we will get married." She said, "Yes, if you marry me in January." So we got married January 29th.

Donsky: Of what year?

Donsky: Of 1939, less than one month later. So we went to New Orleans on our honeymoon. Her brother gave us a lovely wedding at the Worth Hotel in Fort Worth. She had three brothers, Leslie the older one, and Sam and Jack. She had Mary Eleas, who is living in Abilene, and she had Rose who was married to Jack Schloss who lived in Chicago and then later moved to Fort Worth. And then she had Jessie, who was married to Irving Pruden, and Bea who married to Herbie Slatkin. Her father came over from Africa. He was from England originally, and he went to Africa. They lived in Fort Worth many, many years. Her father had just died about a year before we married.

Jenkins: What had he been doing in Africa?

Donsky: I guess in the diamond business, the mines. I really don't know. But anyway, he brought a number of children over from Europe. They were born in Europe. All of them but her sister Bea, and Babe and Sam were born in Ft. Worth. The rest of them were born overseas. We went to New Orleans, and we ran into a bunch of sales people there. We had a lovely honeymoon driving there and driving back. I drove her in to San Angelo in the worst dust storm you have ever seen in your life. It was so dusty you couldn't see. She had never seen San Angelo and didn't know anything about it. And it was really a shame. We had a suite at the Hilton Hotel, a lovely hotel. We later rented a place on Jefferson Street, a duplex. The water would come down when it was

cold, there was a stucco duplex we rented from some friends nextdoor. She would come and help at the store. She is very, very talented and very brilliant as far as judgement is concerned, like pearls and jewelry. We started buying more jewelry. We sold everybody on credit because the margin of profit was there and we gambled.

Jenkins: Did you charge any interest?

Donsky: No interest. And to this day, this is 52 years we charged no interest, no carrying charges, to my knowledge we are the only one in the country that does that. Even today with the margin of profit being small, as we have to be as competitive on all of our diamonds and jewelry, our margin of profit is small but our volume is increased so it takes care of it. In November of that year, 1939, I hemorrhaged, and my wife found me in the bathroom floor bleeding. She called Dr. Victor Schulze and he took me to the clinic hospital. They didn't expect me to live. I had three transfusions. The fireman came and volunteered blood and I had very rare blood, I had a Greek, an Italian and a Jew that gave me blood.

Jenkins: Was this ulcers?

Donsky: Yes. Evidently I had been having this for years, because when I was in partners with Goren I would go about two o'clock to eat. They would have a steak ready. I would have the steak fried, french fries, and somebody would come in the pawn shop and ask for Nathan. Max Goren would come

running. He wouldn't ask them what they wanted. And then after seeing they only want to talk I would have to go back to eating. It was very aggravating. And I had fallen down once before. Before I married I was at the picture show and I fainted one time. So anyway I was on this ulcer deal. So she got hold of my brother Abe who was living in Longview, Texas, and running Max Glazer's Wholesale Liquor. So she got hold of him and talked him into coming to San Angelo and help run the business. Abe, his wife Margaret and daughter Dana moved to San Angelo. In fact two of his daughters were born in San Angelo, Gayle and Jo Anne. In fact Gayle was born two days before my daughter, Lynda, was born. I will get back to that. It took me a long time to get over this, because with her taking care of the food, the milk, the different kinds of food I had to eat. I used to get sick when I had a milk shake or something, I would start perspiring. I had to learn to eat solids before the liquids. Then our business prospered, and we went on, we continued on. Then in the '40s I had a watchmaker that worked for me that had a terrible disposition, Dee Atkinson. And I hired another watchmaker. In those days you were paying about \$30 a week for a watchmaker. So I finally got one that I liked. So this Dee came into the store, and he wanted to go to work. So I said, "Tell you what you do, Dee. You go to one of the little towns around and find a location, and I

will put a jewelry store in there and let you and your wife run it." He goes to Brownwood, and he finds a little location on Baker Street. I went down on a Sunday, and I leased the building for \$40 a month. Two weeks later Camp Bowie decided to settle in Brownwood with 40,000 soldiers. So I got Leon Fine to go to Brownwood.

Jenkins: Did you have any notion of this at all?

Donsky: Nothing, no knowledge. It was just all fate. So I got Leon Fine to go to Brownwood and lease a building on Main Street, 309 Center Avenue, for \$200 a month. I brought my brother-in-law, Bob Slaton, who had worked for a chain and was accustomed to buying in quantities. He ran the store. I brought my sister, Ida Saks, who was living in Dallas. Later I brought my brother, Ervin, who now runs Sterling. He became assistant manager and Bob Slaton was manager. Then we opened up the big store on Center Avenue. During the war the Brownwood store was a mint. Mr. Slaton bought merchandise like it was going out of style. He bought those Karmen bracelets by the gross lots. He bought watches in gross lots. And the firms couldn't find out how he could use that much jewelry and watches. We bought diamond rings already made up from wholesalers. So the next year we were on a quota based on previous year purchases. So all during the war I didn't have to go solicit the blackmarket. Everybody went to the blackmarket. In fact I took \$100,000 and went to New York to go into the

blackmarket to buy merchandise. When I got there I changed my mind. I put it in the Chase National Bank, and I used to use it to pay my income tax because I didn't want the San Angelo bank to know how much I was paying. Bob Slaton thought he was going to go into the army and he left Brownwood. He had built a home in Brownwood, he and my sister Lottie. And my brother, Ervin, became manager of the store. In fact he put in a marble front that is still in existence. Recently we enlarged the store and took in a place nextdoor, but I wouldn't change the marble front because it is still the original front that he put in. And he managed the store there. During the war I never had much time to go to Brownwood to see what was going on because I was too busy in San Angelo with the San Angelo store. Later on after the war we opened up four stores. I had different people who worked for me in Brownwood. They had gone into the army and after they were released I promised them a job, so we opened stores in Odessa, Big Spring, Denison and Paris. Like I had a fellow by the name of Selwyn Leeds who later was president of Zales Retail Stores. He wanted to go to Big Spring and open a store. I went down and rented a building, remodeled it. I spent about \$35,000. In Big Spring those days that was a lot of money. Then I had a fellow that worked for me in San Angelo by the name of Abe Gerson who wanted a store. So I opened a store for him in Odessa.

Jenkins: Give us some dates now.

Donsky: It had to be in the early '40s after World War II. So I opened a store for him. The outcome of the two, we later on opened a store in Denison managed by Dick Hankins and Paris that was run by Bob Slaton, which I let belong to my brother Ervin and my brother Abe, and Bob Slaton were partners in those stores in Paris and Denison. One was formerly named Kish and the one in Denison was Lynn's. Later on they converted them and called them Nathan's Jewelers.

Jenkins: All of them became Nathan's Jewelers.

Donsky: Nathan's, there were six stores. In 1944 I had another hemorrhage, and I liked to have died. My wife was visiting in Fort Worth. My brother Abe called her and told her to hurry back as I wasn't expected to live. Both of these times when I was in the hospital sick, different people came and bought a big diamond or jewelry and would come and show them to me. Joe Clayton from Ozona came in one day, and he bought a two-carat diamond and wanted to show me that he had bought it so that I could hurry and get well. It made me feel good. Different ones, like Jake Crosby from Eldorado, Texas made large purchases. My wife framed up on me in 1945 to go to New York. We were going there all this time, we were going to New York to buy twice a year. She sent a ticket to my brother-in-law, Harry Kaplan, in Dallas who had a mother living in New York to visit. And

he claimed he was going up on a visit, and she paid his fare to go with me. So I went to New York. She said, "While you are there you go to Dr. Winklestein," who had the drip system, "and let him give you some examinations." So this doctor took x-rays each morning for a whole week. When I got through I asked him what I owed him, and he said, "\$300." I paid him \$300. I worked in the afternoon buying jewelry for the stores. And he said, "Either you put your life in the hands of a psychiatrist or have an operation for this ulcer because it has hemorrhaged twice." I had a relative who had the Yale nurses registry in New York, Chic Suskind, she just passed away recently, and she was the sister to my sister Freda's husband, Sam Curtis. She had the largest nurses registry in New York. She suggested Dr. John Garlick, who was considered one of the best surgeons. I had also made arrangements with Ben Rosenthal, Sr. to go to Mayo's for a checkup. But when I hit New York, and I did this. When Dr. Winklestein told me this my wife flew up right away. She took our son Cal to Fort Worth and left him with her mother. She got me to go to another doctor to look at this x-ray, and he told me the same thing. So I had Dr. John J. Garlick operate on me. Let me back up here. I married in 1939. My wife had a miscarriage in 1940. On May 2, 1941 our son, Cal, was born. Our son, Calman, graduated from Texas University and Law

School and was Administrative Editor of Texas Law Review and had three articles published in Law Review while in Law School. At present he is one of the senior partners in Gardere and Wynne law office which has about one hundred lawyers in the firm. He does international and corporate law and does a lot of his work overseas. When my son was born, I was so excited and thrilled my parents flew down, and we had the Bris a week later. I brought in all of the corned beef and different kinds of food and drinks that you could bring in. There was a camp here during the war. I was so proud I gave a party, a bris, at the hotel that will long be remembered when my wife was in the hospital. We had a little affair at the hospital, and then we went to the hotel. We served drinks and all kinds of food there. My doctor stayed there until 6 o'clock that night. They had corned beef and all kinds of food that you could think of, everything that you could think of in the Cactus Room Ballroom. There was really a jamboree.

Jenkins: What is that word "bris" that you are using?

Donsky: The circumcision. Bris. That is the week after the child is born. In fact I have a picture somewhere of the invitation I sent out for his bris. I used to buy every week a baby bond for Cal during the war. I have a picture of him with his baby bonds. I used to give my wife, I don't remember if it was \$15 a week, then later on we bought a home on Mackenzie, and I think we paid \$4,200 for this stucco home.

We added on to it a porch and larger room.

Jenkins: This is in San Angelo?

Donsky: In San Angelo. We carpeted, and we put in the furnace for the floor. And the washed-air air conditioning. Out of the \$15 I gave her she hired a maid and paid \$3 a week for a maid. We would have these people coming from all of these different towns around from these stores for meetings, and she would feed them on weekends. And of course when the high holidays came, all the Jewish people came from the surrounding towns, and they all came over to eat. She was still active in what I was doing at the store pertaining to that. After the operation I remained in New York with my sister, Sara. It took me about a year to get over this operation. My sister, Sara, lived in Riverdale, New York. My wife came back, because the doctor had called her and told her our son was sick. So she came back and got in the car, and my son had put rocks in the gas tank, and the car was chuck-chucking all the way home. Someone drove with her, and she got back to San Angelo. So I stayed in New York, and I would walk a little bit each day. When I was in the hospital I was so thrilled. Before the operation my friend had asked the surgeon how much he charged. So he asked me how I was fixed. I said, "Well, I am not rich nor poor, I can pay my bill." So he told me what he would charge. So when I got through with the operation, I thought I was dying one day. I had had blood transfusions before and

they made me feel better. Incidentally my brother-in-law, Bob Slaton, had flown up to give me blood when I was operated on. I will never forget him. He likes to drink scotch. And the only hospital that I could get in was Doctor's Hospital across the street from the mayor's mansion. And this happened to be D-Day, which was my birthday, June 6, 1945. And all of them were coming in; Eisenhower and the mayor, LaGuardia. I was so thrilled that I came through. The doctor that did my x-rays came in without being asked for consultation, he sent me a bill for \$500. He sent me a bill for a week of x-rays, every day x-rays for \$300 and consultation \$500. My sister was so disgusted. Not only that, he tried to date my wife, that's the kind of doctor he was. Then the doctor that did the operation charged me \$1,000 more than he said because I had ordered my entire quota of Tiffani costume jewelry sent to New York and gave it to all of the nurses. My bill at the hospital was a great deal more, they thought I was a millionaire because of what I had done. I had promised one of the nurses that was on a 12-hour shift I would give her double if I pulled through. See that was a mistake. She was on a 12-hour shift. I paid her double. She went around the hospital and told everybody, and that is when all of this double billing happened. Then I had another nurse at night. I gave her a very expensive watch. I had a good friend of

mine in San Angelo that committed suicide because some false rumors were told about him. It so happened that the First Methodist Church burned down. And the minister from the First Methodist Church wrote me letters and was real nice. So we gave the doors to the First Methodist Church in memory of this fellow, Cub Deal. They were supposed to put a plaque on it in his memory. That was the largest donation that was given at that time, so no one's name was ever put on the doors, it was just put in the book. When I returned back to San Angelo I had to take it easy and relax. Between my wife and my brother Abe, they ran the business. Let me back up. When I first opened up Nathan's Jewelers in the '40s, my brother was with me. We always had a hobby, my wife and I always felt that anything that you do for youth is a good investment. She came out of a family that she had never had to work in her life because they were comfortable, they were well-fixed. But I came out of a family that had to start from scratch. In our business we had to start from scratch. So my biggest hobby was going to all the 4-H and FFA stock shows all over west Texas. And we covered a tremendous amount of towns around San Angelo. We even went as far as Colorado City. We went to Sweetwater, Fort Stockton. Since then we have cut out some of the towns, but we still go to about 18 towns. And I would go, and it would aggravate me to see an uncle or grandfather, especially

in Sterling City, bid up their lamb higher than the poor boys and girls. So I would always get a list from the county agent of the poor boys and girls and I would bid on the poor kids and make their lambs bring more. In fact in one year I let the lambs in Sterling sell for \$60 and I bought all the ones from the poor kids for over \$100. Then there was one boy there that one of the rancher's wives told me, "Here is a boy that really needs the money." One of the parents was in a home and the other was dead. This boy had a hard time getting by. So I ran that lamb up to \$200. \$200 in 4-H in the '40s was a lot of money. And I said to the ranchers standing by me, I picked out three ranchers and said, "You, you, you and I will pay the \$200." Nothing was said. Today we are the largest lamb buyer in the state or maybe country not to own a ranch. In other words not to own a place to keep them. Now we not only bought, but we bid. When these little girls and boys would see us there, they would get happier. I remember Lyndon Johnson's foreman's wife. She and her younger sisters would always primp up the lamb and wink at me to bid their lamb. So we bid their lamb up, and it would bring a good price. The main thing was to see that all of them got good prices. You couldn't buy every lamb, but there were a lot of times that we would end up buying more lambs than I could afford to pay. One time in San Angelo I got hung for over \$7,500.00. In Ozona I got hung for several thousand dollars. We could

always go out and buy the most expensive Cadillac car for what we spent on the show, but I thought it was a good investment. My manager, George Bundren, still continues to do that, together with other employees. They still go to all of these shows. I remember one time I was stranded in New York, and my brother Abe had to go to Ozona to a show in the snow. We always managed to be there. If we couldn't be there we had someone to represent us there. We gave trophies to all of the different shows. Also in the years back we gave a lot of trophies to different things anonymously. There was a fellow called Gus Jones that did a lot for San Angelo. So we had a Gus Jones Memorial trophy for the outstanding athlete in any activity for San Angelo. This started in the early '40s. We used to leave it at the Standard Times, the newspaper office, because they would get more publicity. We gave the Mother Davidson out at Boy's Ranch. We gave the Arthur Broom trophy for rodeo, and a number of things. We also had a Nathan's Jewelers All Sports Award for basketball, for football, and every sport that we gave based on sportsmanship, teamwork, most conscientious player and ability, and the players voted on it. The reason the players voted on them was that the first year Blondy Cross had a group who selected the winner, in the early '40s, we gave a watch, and we ended up with a four-way tie, and the man, Hughes, that made all-state, wasn't even recognized. So it showed that it

wasn't fair. So at the banquet with this Methodist preacher at the Cactus Hotel, I had to run to the store and get a solid gold pocket watch to give to this Hughes. Then there were five. So then we decided that players themselves would vote on it. In other words the winner didn't have to be a star. The purpose of it was to try to get the players to work in harmony with one another. "Everybody needs everybody." That is the whole thing. So we had one for the San Angelo High School. We had one for the Blackshear High School. We had one for the Lakeview High School. We had one for the college. Still today we use big plaques that we put their names on, and it is on display in the high school. In the college we give watches, and we take every sport, ladies' and men's sports, all the way through. We have plaques for all sports there, and we also do it in Brownwood, Texas, at the high school and at Howard Payne University. Prior to 1946 we were buying our diamond jewelry such as rings and pins, etc. from wholesale jewelers and in 1946 my brother Abe and I went to New York and bought \$250,000 worth of loose diamonds from Eichberg, one of the largest and most prominent diamond dealers and cutters in the country. My brother Abe and I set down and selected mountings from Feature, Rombach and Borg, Ide Goldstein Gerson and a number of other mounting houses. When we returned home and a short time later my father passed away and at that time the diamond market took a

tremendous drop in price especially in the finest quality we had purchased, more especially small sizes 200 to the carat which we paid \$450 per carat, dropped overnight to \$225 per carat and 70's and 100 to the carat also dropped. I tried to phone and cancel some but was unable to do any good and since my father had just died I couldn't leave and go to New York as we were in mourning for one week so I sent Bob Slaton to New York to see if he could cancel part of the order, but Eichberg wouldn't do anything about it. So after the week was over and I returned to San Angelo, I would phone different mounting houses and ask about delivery of my rings and some would tell me they had not received the diamonds. Then I would phone Eichberg and tell them to cancel and send me a credit memo, as although they had billed me, they had not delivered the diamonds to me and this was not fair. When we started making up our own rings we incorporated a wholesale firm called Marlowe. We were incorporated for \$50,000 all paid in capital and the diamonds were purchased from Eichberg under Marlowe's name. Eichberg wanted to know who would stand good for this bill and since they had not been honest with us I sent them \$50,000 Marlowe had and told them Marlowe would pay this out without interest and it took us several years to pay them out as after cancelling some we were shipped about \$175,000 worth of diamonds and we had to accept the mounting that we ordered,

even those they had no diamond for. So some of these mountings were melted up and we took a tremendous loss over several years, but we were able to do this. On all other purchases we continued to discount. We saved money as we cut out the middle man and could sell for less. We owned rings for much less than we used to pay the wholesaler for, and this enabled us to use direct diamond importers as we began buying from Belgium and other places overseas. About 19 years ago we started an all sports banquet with the junior college. We put on the banquet, and we feed the group, 500 or 600, that shows up. We pay all of the expenses and give watches. And then we started a scholarship fund. Every year we put \$5,000 into the fund. We also started that a number of years back at Howard Payne. Then we select someone that has done the most for the college, and we give a scholarship in his or her honor. We started out with Blondie Cross, who was the first one for a scholarship to be named after. Then we had Houston Harte, the owner of the paper, and R.G. Carr, a philanthropist, quite a number of people we have had over a period of maybe 17 or 18 years that we have given these scholarships in their names. On our 50th year in business we added \$50,000 to the scholarship fund. They could only use the interest off of the money. And at that time we asked Lakeview what they would need the most. They said that they needed a football scoreboard. They thought it was too high, so I

agreed to give them a football scoreboard, an 18-foot solid state all electric fair play football scoreboard. After I gave that to them, then I decided we had better offer a basketball or football scoreboard to every school in our trade territory. So we offered one to every town around west Texas and the only ones that didn't take it were Coleman, Christoval and Ballinger, and little towns like Miles accepted. And we ended up giving away 28 football and basketball scoreboards. Then on my 75th birthday we ended up giving two tremendous combination football and track scoreboards to the stadium where Central High and Angelo State play and two tremendous professional basketball scoreboards at Angelo State University and two basketball scoreboards at Lakeview High and football and track at Brownwood like at Angelo Stadium. So as it stands Lakeview has two basketball scoreboards and a football scoreboard. Central High School has two basketball scoreboards and a combination football and track. Angelo State University has two tremendous basketball scoreboards, even with 2-30 second times that go with women's basketball scores, and a tremendous combination football and track scoreboard where the Houston Oilers train. And, of course, all the different towns around like Ozona, Sonora. Even Blackwell wanted a scoreboard. Around Brownwood we put them in. We put them in Early, Texas. In every town that selected what they wanted.

Jenkins: How far around San Angelo did you put in these scoreboards? You were saying something in the neighborhood of a 150 mile radius of San Angelo.

Donsky: Yes. Then we also have taken an active part in all of the different charities that go there, like for instance the St. John Hospital building fund. I was the chairman to raise money to build that, and donated a lot of equipment there while I was operated on. Now getting back to my health which I overlooked. I had a hemorrhage in 1939, I had a hemorrhage in 1944. I was operated on in 1945. Then I had a prostate operation which I had a lot of difficulty with. Ten years ago I had a kidney removed. In fact they noticed something on one of my kidneys, and they couldn't tell if it was malignant or not. When they got in it was so entwined the doctor said the other kidney was in good shape and would take a lot of time, so he went ahead and removed the kidney. Later on they found that it was not malignant. That is the story they tell me. I had a gangrenous gallbladder in San Angelo a few years back and liked to died. If it hadn't been for my wife insisting that the doctor come and do something, he said that I had just a stomachache. She rushed me to the hospital. They checked me and checked me, and when they opened me up they found a gangrenous gallbladder. If I hadn't been opened I wouldn't be here to tell the tale. Then I had the prostate

again recently. Twenty years ago I had a little cancer on my nose. I had it x-ray treated in San Angelo. Recently a little pimple came out. I had it checked, and it turned out to be cancer. So I had Dr. Cottel use this mole system. Dr. Barton did plastic surgery, and they had to take the skin from the right side of my face and push it over. I had an implant on my right eye when they removed the cataract. So what I am bringing out is this: if I hadn't been married to my wife Sylvia, better known as Babe, I wouldn't be here, because it took a lot of tender care to take care of me. Out of the entire family I have had more than all of them put together, and I am still here at 76. So I am very thankful, and everytime anything good happens to me or I come out of something, we think of what we can do for other people. We do charity spontaneous. We are never pressured into anything, and we are solicited lots of times and it doesn't mean anything. But if we see something that needs help, just like for an illustration, we started a deal in San Angelo called Helping Hand. I called the newspaper, and I told them, "This is something where you have emergencies that you can't take care of." So I gave them \$500, and of course the newspaper editor took charge of it. The newspaper became the administrator. I am still on the board and am still contributing. In fact we had an occasion not long ago where a Latin-American boy was dying. He kept wishing that he could go to Disneyland. I read the

article in the paper, and people read the article and don't pay any attention to it. We called the newspaper and we said, "We are anonymous donors and will send him to Disneyland and pay the plane fare and all." They called me and said, "Could they take the family and go by car?" We said, "Yes." So they took the family and went by car. On another occasion where a fellow had something pertaining to sickness that couldn't be cured, needed a certain kind of bed, needed to go to a certain place. I said we would furnish it. They finally found out that they couldn't do anything and they wanted a certain bed and other equipment, so we furnished that. One of my ex-employees has a child that has epeleptic fits. The mother had a ruptured appendix when she was pregnant. The doctor took the appendix out and then took the child. The child is epeleptic. She is twenty some-odd years old, and naturally she can't get a job. We made arrangements for the high school for her to file, and they pay her so much a week. We give a donation to the Helping Hand, and they turn around and give the school the money so the school can pay her because all she does is file. At the end of the year whatever is left in the fund, they give it to her as a bonus. And she took a little cruise with her mother on the money that was left. She was so excited. She knows nothing about it. Her mother knows. And we had this man that worked for us at

Veterans Hospital at Temple. These doctors give too many pills. We kept him on the payroll for a long time. Now we pay him at the end of the year. We put money into it for him that equals to so much a week. The money will someday go to this girl. We have a lot of different things that we do that we don't want to mention because the people might get the wrong impression. But every organization in San Angelo and around west Texas, we have done something for them. In fact we had an incident in Rock Springs which is far away from our territory. The ladies came into the store and heard about what we did, and said, "Will you do something for us?" I said, "What do you need?" She said, "We need a refrigerator where the club meets." This was several hundred miles from San Angelo. I said, "I tell you what you do. You go buy one and send me the bill." So they bought the biggest one with the freezer, the ice maker and everything else and sent us a bill, and we sent them a check. So these are things that we enjoy doing. We feel like we should give back some of the things, and anything that you do for youth we think is good.

Jenkins: Let's pick up the business. Let's take the business and grow from . . . where were we . . . the mid-forties.

Donsky: Well, we had San Angelo. Then we opened up Brownwood. Brownwood expanded. We took the little store on the side street. We kept it for a while, and then we closed it out and had the main store at 309 Center Avenue. Then we

opened up Big Springs and Odessa. The manager at Big Springs, after he was there three weeks, and we had spent all of that money, decided he didn't like Big Springs. We wanted him to open in Midland, but he wanted Big Springs. Then he decided to leave and went to work for Zales. So we were hung with the Big Springs store. So we brought another fellow in there, and he wouldn't operate it the way we wanted him to. He wouldn't give refunds. One thing we always try to teach our employees, if you tell the truth you don't have to worry what you say. You can tell it the same every time and be fair to your customer. Give refunds, do everything that you can. So we had a lot of trouble there. We finally moved the merchandise out of there. We sold the fixtures for \$10,000. With reference to the Odessa store, which we sold first, Mr. Gerson who ran the store, we gave him a deal of a salary plus 25% of the net profits. Later on he decided he wanted to open his own store. So he ended up buying a little store and took in Jack Cohn as a partner in a little store. We think he made a mistake. So he had 50% of the small store, but he operated differently with that cut price operation that we wouldn't tolerate. He gave us notice, so my brother Abe came down and stayed there for a while. Then my wife's sister's husband, Herbie Slatkin, who had worked for us in Brownwood, came down to run the store. He was manager of the store. This sister, Bea, had a child in Odessa. She

developed a skin disease, and there was no cure. My wife sent her all over the country, took her to Mayo, took her to different places to try to find a cure. Cortizone and ACTH had just come out, and it was very expensive. So we got cortizone and ACTH. My wife was worried sick. We felt like at Fort Worth her sister could live longer, so one Sunday I called Lester's Jewelers and I sold the store to them. And Bea, her husband Herb and daughter Kathy and son Rickey moved to Fort Worth, and she lived for about 5 years with this cortizone and ACTH, and then she died. Odessa turned out to be a very lucrative store. It was a shame that I sold it, for Odessa then became big. But life is too short, and it wasn't worth the worry and aggravation. That is the only way I could make them move to Ft. Worth and have her life extended years. I was always more interested in San Angelo. San Angelo, that store meant my life. For some reason or another that store was an unbelievable store. It meant a great deal to me. Then, of course, the two stores in east Texas, Paris and Denison. My brother, Ervin, who managed the Brownwood store, decided that he wanted to move to Dallas where he could have a Jewish atmosphere for his children. Dr. Michael Donsky and Howard were born while in Brownwood. The oldest daughter, Marilyn, was born in Dallas, and the youngest daughter, Gayle, was born in Dallas later. So he came to Dallas, and he bought out Kuhn Company. He traveled on the road selling jewelry.

Our daughter Linda is married to Dr. Allen Gold, Chief Surgeon in ear, nose at Frankfurt Hospital in Philadelphia. Linda attended Washington University in St. Louis and graduated from Temple University with Master of Science and received a Degree of Design from Drexel University. She has one daughter named Elizabeth Nicol who will be eleven years old on April 15th.

Our son Calman is married to Linda Bormaster of Houston and they have four children, Robin in her second year of Brandeis, and a graduate of Greenhill. A daughter Joy and a son Jeffrey.

Jenkins: Give us some dates on that.

Donsky: This had to be in '48, somewhere around there. He traveled on the road. In fact I give him credit for being the first one that had the scooters under the large cases. He didn't patent it, but he started that. He built that himself to carry it around. Nobody would pay their bills. They all wanted discounts. So in desperation he opened up in the Mercantile Building a little office. And I took the wall fixtures from what I started with in San Angelo, the wall cases, and sent them to him. He and his wife ran the place there. We used to send him merchandise to sell. He built up, and then all of a sudden he decided to gamble. This brother, in other words, he goes first class on everything he does. So he leased a building downstairs at a very expensive rate and put in Sterling. Of course,

we used to get merchandise that he couldn't get, we would get for him. He built a tremendous business.

Jenkins: Is that where Sterling started?

Donsky: Yes, that is where Sterling started. Sterling has got to be 33 years old.

Jenkins: Where did the name come from?

Donsky: He got the name himself, Sterling. That was his name that he copyrighted.

Jenkins: I mean why did he choose that, do you know?

Donsky: Because the word Sterling just appealed to him.

Jenkins: Okay. It didn't represent a person or place or such.

Donsky: No, it didn't represent a person or place. Abe remained in San Angelo. After Ervin was successful then my brother, Abe, decided to go to Houston. So Ervin and my brother-in-law Bob Slaton went in partners with Dave Rubin and Abe upstairs in Houston. Later on they moved to a downstairs location. Rubin passed away, and Bob Slaton and Ervin sold their interest to my brother, Abe. All this time the Sterling in Dallas was owned and run by Ervin and his wife, Frances, and Houston was owned by Abe and his wife, Margaret. Then they decided to open a store on Northwest Highway about 22 years ago, or something like that. At that time they incorporated, and we three brothers, Ervin, Abe and Nathan, became owners and my son, Cal and daughter Linda took part of my stock. Later on Houston decided to put a store in, a suburban store, on Westheimer, so we merged

Houston with Dallas, and it all became one company. Then recently we opened a store in Richardson, which is in the same group. So now we have three stores in Dallas and two in Houston. Ervin has the largest amount of stock, then Abe, then myself, my son and daughter. Now the two stores in San Angelo and Brownwood belong to my children, my son Cal and my daughter, Linda, and my wife and I. My father died in 1946. Two weeks prior to my father's death my daughter Linda was born and two days before Gayle Donsky was born in San Angelo. My mother-in-law passed away in 1947, and my mother in 1948. Everything that we owned our children have already been involved in, and our children are involved in our San Angelo and Brownwood operation, as well as our landlord for San Angelo. They are also involved in Sterling Jewelry and Distributing Company as far as stockholders. My son is a director. They are also involved in the land, which is ENA Properties, which is Ervin, Nathan and Abe. But again I want to stress that everything that we have invested in youth we have been well rewarded. You asked whether my wife had anything to do with the operation, yes, she did work at the store. And years back it used to be when the ranchers would come into the store and they would all wait for me regardless of how much I had, she would talk with them until I could get to them or she would show them; otherwise it

would be impossible to keep them in the store. She did a lot of the pearl selection. She is a very good connoisseur of pearl and jewelry. She knows jewelry, and she knows the business. When I was sick she was one of the ones that ran the business together with my brother Abe.

Jenkins: And she still is a counselor to you, I suppose?

Donsky: Yes, she is. Everything that we do. We keep our money together. She doesn't get a certain amount. When we first started in business she used to get \$15 a week, and she saved enough money for me to borrow. When I first went into business I borrowed several hundred dollars from that cousin, Freda Hine, too, to go into the business. I had to borrow everywhere. So she helped pay back these things. Now before we owned a car, we bought a car from my parents. They had a car here in Dallas before we ever had a car. So that is the way things were operated, and she helped make that decision. If they needed anything in the house, they got it. We have always been considered the head of the house, even though today my brother that runs Sterling has a bigger interest, and I am sure he is worth more money than we are worth, and the one in Houston has had that for a long time. Each one runs their own, and each one is very, very charitable. Now the one in Dallas is a very big giver to Jewish charities as well as other charities, and the one in Houston does the same thing. So we have always

inherited that from our parents. And the wives go along.

Jenkins: As of today, the Nathan's Jewelers are in what location?

Donsky: San Angelo and Brownwood.

Jenkins: How many stores?

Donsky: Two stores, both downtown. Now here is the story I can give you on San Angelo. For many years I was very foolish. I was afraid that Zales would come into town and hurt my business. So I leased every building that I could, which is crazy. That decision right there, represents God knows how much, maybe \$50,000 to \$100,000. I bought out a candy store, confectionery, and I agreed to guarantee the note. It took me years to pay \$100 a month to pay him out, and I took the lease, and I got hung with the lease. I went into partners with a drugstore that cost me \$30,000. I didn't want Zales to get that location. It finally came to a point and I kept the optometrists out, too. So it finally came to a point to where an optometrist called me, and said, "Now, Zales wants to lease this building, do you want it?" I said, "No, let them have it." My brother Ervin said, "The best thing to happen to you is if you would let Zales come in because all they can do is help you." So they moved across the street. Our business expanded. We just went to town because of the things that we did that are different. When I first started in business every baby that was born we would give a gold baby ring. They used to cost about

30¢. Now they cost over \$5. We would buy them by the gross lots. All of those that are born in San Angelo we would get out of the paper and we mail them, because there are no gimmicks that you have to come in and get it. Those out of town when we would get a card, we mail it. Now some merchants run an ad in the paper, and the first baby born gets so many quarts of milk and gets this and gets that. We run an ad, but they won't let us run it in that edition. We ran later that every baby that is born gets a gold ring. So we have those gold rings, and later on they wear them around their neck. Then another thing that we do, every graduate that graduates in west Texas in every town around, we send them a card. They come in and we give them a key of their school colors and a key chain with it or something. We always give something with it. That covers all over west Texas. It goes as far as Fort Stockton. Some of those schools don't come in. Then every bride gets a bride's gift. For marriage we give them gifts, our customers. God forbid that anything happens, but if some of them pass away we either send flowers or we give some memorial or something. I mentioned the scholarship funds and the different things that we do there. Anything that we can do in an area, where they need something we supply it. We started out years ago giving policemen, the firemen, the State Highway Department, the emergency corps a gift for Christmas. We pick something that we don't sell. I just ordered 1,400

gifts. We give all of the firemen, and the way we do it we box them up, we get a list of the names, we put the names on them. We have a truck come up and pick up the gifts. We give the police department the same way. We give the emergency corps, the people who work on different charitable organizations. We used to give the State Highway; now they won't let us. We used to give the postmen, and they won't let us. We give some of the State Highway men, the ones that we know, they come by. We give all of the coaches, all of the principals and their secretaries, heads of the schools, administrative department, heads of the college, the heads of the city, city commissioners and all of the heads of the departments, the heads of the county, the sheriff's department, the 4-H deal, anything that we can think of. The Boy's Ranch, the people that work at the Boy's Ranch. In fact we just got through giving equipment for the Boy's Ranch, exercise equipment, that 12 people can work on at one time, big heavy equipment that they can chin, do this, do that. We just gave that to them. In fact it has just started. I just sent them a check. We gave the Latin American playground some equipment. It is really used. We gave the Salvation Army playground equipment for the lot next door to them. They opened up a mall. They have a tremendous mall opened late at night. And they have Zales, Corrigan's, Huey Wilson, J. C. Penney has

a big jewelry department, Holland's, Sears and Roebuck, Gordon's, and several others. There are eight or nine jewelry departments there. Now the stores downtown moved away, they gave up. Our business has expanded every year. We now employ 60 people right there. We are downtown. We bought a parking lot across the street for the convenience of our customers. There is nothing in our block to speak of. When San Angelo won the state championship in football back in the '40s, we gave all the players gold watches. When a High School player could not accept any gift we gave all of the coaches watches in Lakeview. We give all the coaches watches at Central several times for winning different things. We give the college athletes watches. They won the national championship in basketball, and instead of giving 12 watches we gave 40 some-odd watches. On this thing here when they won the NAI football championship, we gave, I think, 80 some-odd quartz watches. We even gave the secretary, the ladies that worked for the people, watches, all the people involved in any kind of sports and all of the women involved. So all of our life we have done that. It is all different things, and we enjoy those things that we do. Right now we try to do something different than anyone else does. Like for instance on my 50th birthday. For many years we have had a Nathan and Sylvia Donsky Foundation. We put money in there on good years to accumulate over a period of years to do something on our 50th.

We also have a Jewish Foundation of Greater Dallas, Nathan and Sylvia Donsky Philanthropic Fund where we can give stock. Like for instance if I have some stock and it has appreciated in value. I give the stock to the foundation and they sell it. Then I can use that money for donations. So we are able to do a lot of things that way. Of course, the trouble is that at my age of 76 I am out of the stock-market with the exception of maybe one stock, and I don't have any more of that to do. Now the only other thing, we are thinking about giving our own stock in our company and then the company buying it back the following year as treasury stock, see. We are just thinking of that. There is no way to accumulate money, be able to give the kind of money. Now Sterling gives the limit that we are allowed to give in charity every year. My company gives that allowed. Now I am incorporated, recently. Before I was a limited partnership, so I could give up to 50% of earnings so that is the reason I could get by. Now the maximum this year is 10%. It was 5% before. In fact we over gave last year, we misjudged and it was charged back for next year. And we over gave in Sterling. So those are the things that we do. So our business in San Angelo has expanded every year. We enlarged about 15 years ago and moved across the street. We still have the original store that I was in from Nathan's. And I am still paying rent, although Leon Fine is deceased and his two daughters

own it. I also pay the taxes and insurance on it, because I just feel that way. Everybody thinks I am crazy. We use it for storage. Where we are we still continue. We enlarged. We bought a building and tore it up, an old building where the old telephone company was, an old historical building on a corner on Chadbourne and Twohig, which is two story with a third of a basement. We primarily sell diamonds and watches and jewelry, is our big thing. We have a small amount of electronics, which is very competitive and no margin on it. We have a small amount of luggage. And the rest of it is gift items. We have a big bride's department. We sell sterling and china and crystal and a lot of gift items. Like I say, ever since I have been in business we have had no interest or carrying charges. We used to carry for 12 months. Now we carry for 10 months, no interest, no carrying charges. It so happens that our collections exceed our charge sales every month of the year with the exception of December. So every year our accounts increase. And the way the law is you don't pay your tax on your unrealized profit on your accounts receivable. In other words you pay it when you collect it. So we are not out money for that. So we always have a large umbrella, and each year it gets larger because your accounts get larger the more your business expands. By encouraging credit a person spends more than he or she would if they paid cash and each time they come in to make a payment we

have a chance to sell them again and this is very important to us as we have some customers who have been trading with us for 30 to 40 years.

Jenkins: Do you have much of a credit loss?

Donsky: Our credit loss between our collections and our charge sales usually runs less than $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1%.

Jenkins: Is that pretty comparable to the rest of the industry?

Donsky: Oh, it is better. Because, you see, the thing is this: don't forget that what we charge off we collect a big portion. Now in Brownwood we let them use a small claims court, but we won't in San Angelo. San Angelo is like a parent to me. In other words I don't want anything to jeopardize anything. And the small claims court makes them pay off. So we close our eyes and let them do it there, but in San Angelo we don't. We do a lot in San Angelo that we don't do in Brownwood.

Jenkins: Do you lose any more in San Angelo percentagewise?

Donsky: No. I don't think we do. It varies. You might lose 1%. That is way above the average.

Jenkins: What is the average, do you have any idea?

Donsky: I don't know, 2% to 3%, I would imagine. They come back later on, we get people that come back and need to make a loan, we turn them in to the credit bureau and they pay off. You know, you lose more on pilferage than you do on that.

Jenkins: Do you have a good deal of trouble with that?

Donsky: Oh yes, you have pilferage. You get people that come in in groups. We have all kinds of alarm systems. In San Angelo

we have this shatter proof glass that you can't break in there. Oh, there are a lot of things that we have.

Jenkins: Is your pilferage worse in the big cities like Dallas than it is in the smaller towns?

Donsky: It is hard to say. Yes, I would imagine so. To get back to my brothers, when we were children I used to take Abe with me to the ballgames to show him how to sell peanuts and soda water. He's not going to like this. And he would never be happy with what he made. So I always used to stick a little extra money in his money changers, like he made more, see. And the younger brother Ervin was a real hustler. In other words he worked ballgames, he sold football tickets, he did everything. During the early 20's, a group of youngsters used to go to College Station, and at Texas A&M we would sell football programs. We used to take the program, and we would buy them for 15¢ with no return privilege. We would fold them in the middle with the picture, and we would sell them for 50¢ to everyone that came to see the games. We used to make a lot of money. We made several hundred dollars on that. Now they sell them for 50¢. Then we would turn right around and buy them from the cadets for 25¢ and resell for 50¢. We would sell more than 100 cadets, and there were about 8 or 10 of us youngsters and we would come back with a lot of money. So my baby brother Ervin used to work at ballgames. He used to work at football games and sell tickets, scab tickets and

everything else. In fact, we were a close knit family. My sister's husband, Harry Kaplan, worked in Philadelphia. He worked in Dallas at a printing place and then his relatives sent him to Philadelphia for Triangle poster advertising. My parents went up there, and they were very unhappy with the way they were living, making a living. So he had a chance to buy out Dallas Poster and Printing Company. So I loaned Harry \$500 to pay down on it. I went to the bank and borrowed the money. I was in the pawn shop then.

Jenkins: This was what year?

Donsky: This had to be in about '33, '34, '35, somewhere around there. And I also sent them the money for tickets to come back in the train to Dallas. And Harry opened the American Poster and Printing Company. They lived at our house. The family made room for them, so they could live economically. Then Ervin worked Harry at the printing place. He was a tall lanky boy. Ervin did not draw a salary. I think he got an overcoat out of the deal. So when he would go to work at a football game on a Saturday, he would pay somebody to work for him so that he could go out and sell those tickets and make several hundred dollars. I mean it was a close knit group. It was always, what one has the other one has. We have always helped one another.

Jenkins: One of the things that I would like for you to talk about is the Depression of the '30s. And you really got started during that time.

Donsky: In the '30s when the banks were going closed I was in the pawn shop, and we took checks. We operated with very little money, and we held those checks. It was a miracle the way we did it. I went to the bank across the street, and I was banking there, for Goren and Donsky. They changed bank presidents, and I asked him what Goren and Donsky's loan limit was. It was \$1,000. I said, "We can't live on \$1,000." Then I asked him what Nathan Donsky's loan limit was. I had a larger loan limit with concessions than Goren and Donsky had. And then, of course, that is when Leon Fine went to the First National Bank and told them that he would be good for whatever I was good for, so then they loaned me money. Then later on, Hallmark, I went to him one day and asked if I could borrow money on my own signature. He said, "It makes him look good to the directors. What difference does it make to me?" I said, "It makes a lot of difference. I want to get it on my own." He never did tell me that, but he told others it was the biggest mistake he ever made. So then Leon and I went up the street and ran into Houston Harte, owner of Harte-Hanks Newspapers. Incidentally, he was a very close friend of mine, and he handled all of my advertising. I had special

rates with him. And every piece of jewelry that he purchased came from me. When his son, Ed, married I supplied the diamond engagement ring. When Houston, his other son, married, I supplied the diamond engagement ring. We made for Mrs. Harte an emerald and diamond necklace worth a lot of money. Then I made her an emerald and diamond pin and a special watch attachment. In fact any piece of jewelry he ever had made, I had made for him. We were very close friends. I found out in later years when he was a little on the senile side what happened. We had a competitor there, Holland Jewelry, that made a western buckle set. We were a little two-by-four joint and they were a big store. There were Holland's and Leffel, two big outstanding jewelry stores in the town. You used to have to have a calling card to go see Mr. Chase Holland. He was always in the back in a private office. But Nathan Donsky was always in the front to meet everybody and to greet everybody. So at these stock shows every time you turned around you would see one of our employees out at the stock show bidding and buying lambs. And Mr. Holland used to complain to the newspaper about us being in the newspaper buying and giving awards. So Mr. Harte put a quietus on it. So instead of encouraging the merchants to patronize auctions in the trade area which would help every business with the trade area ranchers, they didn't do it. We would bring people

into town that would help the other merchants. They would never go along with us. Chase Holland followed us one time to Ozona and instead of buying a lamb for 90 pounds or 100 pounds which the boy or girl deserved something, he buys one for 220 pounds and pays \$2.20 a pound. He received the bill from a couple of towns, and he never went back to another show. And all of these auctioneers would know me or one of my employees there, and they would kind of protect us. Like I went to Mason one time, and I was bidding on lambs. And I bid \$75. As you know it is a German town and very tight and ultra conservative. So I bought the lamb, and I bid \$75.00 on another one. I bought four lambs in a hurry, and I picked up and walked out of the show. And the people wanted to know why. I said, "I didn't come up here to see how many lambs I could buy, if you people don't appreciate it." And the same thing happened in Junction. And finally Lem Jones, the auctioneer, protected me. I had a friend of mine, Nelson Johnson, we gave something in his memory. He was an auctioneer. He would turn his head and wouldn't let me buy too many things, because he was protecting me. Getting back to our business . . .

Jenkins: In the Depression.

Donsky: During the Depression it increased right along, we went along. And from the time I went in business our business

increased every year.

Jenkins: Even during the Depression.

Donsky: Even during the Depression. Then Nathan's really sky-rocketed. Then I hired my managers. We have a lot of help. The help in Brownwood, I have a watchmaker by the name of Al Staudt who has been in Brownwood 42 years. He is starting his 43rd year. We had a fellow managing there, Jake Fair, who recently passed away, he went into the service and then came back, he was there over 30 some-odd years. We had a Buster Bishop, a watchmaker, in San Angelo passed away recently. He had been in San Angelo about 37 years. We now have George Bundran, the manager and supervisor of both stores, started out as a bookkeeper. He has been in San Angelo over 37 years. He runs both stores. We are now incorporated. He is president and I am chairman of the board. Then we have I. H. Maynard, Jr., a bookeeper, who has been working in San Angelo about 35 years. We have Dorothy Arthur, manager of china and silver, she worked for me in 1947 and then left to have a child and has been back about 25 years. We have quite a number of people that have been with us a lot of years. Domingo Diaz has been at the San Angelo store 24 years. James Moreland, 25 years at the Brownwood store. Bob Simpson, the manager of the Brownwood store, hasn't been there too long. But we are very fortunate in the longevity of our employees. Now we started years ago, and this was a lot of money, when an

employee worked for us 25 continuous years we gave them a big party, and let them invite whoever they wanted to and gave them \$2,500. And every member of the group of the 25 years club gets \$500. So Al Staudt, the Brownwood watchmaker, has gotten about 7 or 8 \$500's. Now in Brownwood year before last we recognized Al for his 40th year in Brownwood, and we have a scholarship in his honor at Brownwood Howard Payne University. We also had all of his children down from different parts of the country and let him take off some time and have dinner for his children, their spouses, together with his wife so that he could take them different places. Like I say, our business has expanded today. We employ about 60 people.

Jenkins: This is just San Angelo.

Donsky: Just San Angelo, and about 18 in Brownwood. During Christmas we have about 85 people in San Angelo. I would safely say that we do a very large volume of business in San Angelo.

Jenkins: You have the area around San Angelo.

Donsky: We are the largest jewelry store in west Texas. In fact we own the building next door. If the economy was right we would enlarge it. If we go down 50 feet more we would have 125 x 125. It is an L shaped building.

Jenkins: So you are the largest jewelry store in west Texas.

Donsky: Yes.

Jenkins: What would you say west of?

Donsky: I would say one of the largest retail in Texas. Because I don't know of any store, there is nothing in Odessa or Big Springs or out there that I know of. Not discount operation. Now mine is a high type retail jewelry store. You see, Nathan's is retail. In other words it is a different operation entirely. Like for instance we handle Piaget, Corum, and Concord watches and we do not have cut prices. We have a set price, a legitimate price. We stand behind what we sell.

Jenkins: Nathan's

Donsky: Nathan's. And it has the respect of the community. Like for instance they will have a golf tournament or something, we will put up awards for it. We will put up awards for anything that goes on. And all of the 4-H and FFA shows we give them trophies, even where we don't have a stock show. Now, incidentally, we also have the Nathan's Jewelers awards in all of the surrounding towns that will let us, like Ozona and Sonora. In other words we have a plaque based on four points; Sportsmanship, Teamwork, Most Conscientious Player and Ability, and the winner's name goes on it. It is a permanent plaque. If the coaches win something, like Sonora won, we give all of the coaches watches. We belong to most of the Chambers of Commerce in west Texas so that they can't say that you are not trading at home.

Jenkins: What is your geographical trade area for San Angelo, then?

Donsky: We get a little business out of Kerrville. We get a lot out of Junction and Mason. We get a little out of Fort Stockton. We get it out of Ballinger, Coleman, Miles, Eden, Eldorado, Metzton, Iraan, Sheffield, Blackwell, Garden City, Ozona, Sonora, Big Lake, McCamey, Rankin and others. We get Sterling City, out of Big Spring. We get some out of Abilene.

Jenkins: That is strictly retail.

Donsky: Yes.

Jenkins: Do you do any mail-order out of there?

Donsky: Yes. A fair mail-order. When we run an ad, it goes out to all of these little towns. It so happens that our paper reaches Midland-Odessa before breakfast, and they don't have a morning paper. So they read our paper. We were at one time the largest distributor of Mido watches in the United States. We no longer handle them because they changed ownership and is not as good a watch as it was. The jewelers would copy our ad and tear off our name and put it in the window. We have an advantage in that we have buying together with Sterling and Nathan's. We import a lot of jewelry now. We sent a buyer over to Italy to get our chains. We buy the gold and have it fabricated over there and pay them for the labor. We get our watches from Switzerland. We send a buyer over to Switzerland, and we

have our own brand called Rivera. I started out about 40 years ago because they were cutting prices on watches. Zales tries to buy something as cheap as they can, and they don't care how good a quality it is. We try to get something as fine as we can, and we want good quality. All our watches carry a one year unconditional guarantee.

Jenkins: Now Sterling, does it do something in addition to retailing? Does it do wholesale?

Donsky: Yes. Everything is wholesale that they sell. Their main business is they sell to oil companies, insurance companies, premiums. That is how it got started. In other words Sterling wanted to sell the companies in quantities and they in turn made Sterling sell their employees. That is the reason they have the card system. They control who they sell.

Jenkins: So just anyone doesn't walk in there and buy retail.

Donsky: That's right.

Jenkins: Though people do. Most of that is wholesale business.

Donsky: It is all wholesale. The price that you pay is the same the company pays.

Jenkins: But still, the way the books define it, if I walk in as an individual I am buying retail, although I am paying wholesale prices. But most of it really goes out in large quantities..

Donsky: A lot of it goes out in large quantities. This has come

about by their employees insisting we serve them, and then it expanded into a point.

Jenkins: I see. Now I am not sure you hit that, how Sterling grew as a result of these institutional buyers.

Donsky: The way they grew is, when they first opened up, an insurance company would come in and buy certain quantities. Like in Houston they have some companies that would buy 5,000 or something like that of an item or things and then you have it here. And that is the way they originated. And then they sent their employees then to service them. And then they grew.

Jenkins: Just like everyone else.

Donsky: We have open accounts, and we have installments. And every month we collect about 21% or 22% of what we have on our books in a month. Some of it is open and some of it is installment. By selling on credit a customer will spend more money than they would if they had to pay cash and we carry our own accounts. About 30% of our business is cash, and about 70% is charge, in Nathan's. In Sterling it is more cash, a lot more.

Jenkins: Not all of those individual accounts, like you have. Let's go back and hit briefly on a couple of things on the Depression. Your businesses did well during the Depression.

Donsky: Yes.

Jenkins: But what was happening in San Angelo during the Depression?

Donsky: San Angelo wasn't felt as badly. They had their sheep

and their ranches. If there is anything that I have ever done that has been rewarding and paid off ten fold is the youth, the 4-H and FFA. I have had boys come all the way from Amarillo and buy engagement rings.

Jenkins: But in terms of the town, the town then of San Angelo, because it was based considerably on a farming economy, you don't think they felt the Depression so much.

Donsky: I don't think they felt it. The ranchers we had drought. We had a flood in Ozona. During the Ozona flood we ran an ad in Ozona, "Everybody that had their Mido watch ruined, we will repair free of charge." We do crazy things. The ranchers that owed us during the drought, we sent the money back to them and held the account until they could pay it. So, no, we didn't feel the economy. We went along. In other words at the time it didn't cost a lot to operate a business.

Jenkins: Did you see much Depression? I mean the citizens of San Angelo, do you think?

Donsky: No, I didn't see much Depression. San Angelo didn't overgrow like Midland-Odessa and those towns. At 70,000 it never was a big town.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Okay, I want to go back now. Give us some idea, from the time you went into business to the present time of how the sales volume has grown. Percentage-wise or whatever way you are willing to do that.

- Donsky: We have done in a week as much as we did in a year, going way back. We do more in a month than later on we did in a year.
- Jenkins: But Nathan's has always been constant growth.
- Donsky: It is always constant growth.
- Jenkins: Have you ever had a bad year?
- Donsky: No, we have had a year where there was very little increase. Years like that.
- Jenkins: You have already told us the distribution area. How about the growth in the number of employees over the years?
- Donsky: We started out with four employees. We have 60 in San Angelo and 85 during Christmas, and 18 in Brownwood.
- Jenkins: Now you are talking about Nathan's.
- Donsky: Nathan's.
- Jenkins: What kind of financing over the years?
- Donsky: We have always had bank loans at prime rate. We have always been very fortunate. I have never been turned down for a loan.
- Jenkins: Have you quit borrowing?
- Donsky: Oh, no, we will always borrow, more at certain times than others.
- Jenkins: How about Nathan's, do you still borrow money?
- Donsky: Oh, yes. We borrow occasionally, not as much.
- Jenkins: The type of ownership. For a long time you said you were a limited partnership.

Donsky: This business started out as Nathan's Jewelers, my wife and I. Then we took our children in it. I don't have the date, but it has been, I guess, 25 years ago or longer. Then two years ago we became a corporation.

Jenkins: Until then it was . . .

Donsky: It was a limited partnership. The stock all belongs to the family. The officers, even though my manager is the president, he owns no stock.

Jenkins: Nathan's is a family business.

Donsky: A family business.

Jenkins: Sterling's is a family business.

Donsky: Yes. It all belongs to the family.

Jenkins: Let's go back to Nathan's. Now you said you are the biggest thing out in west Texas. Who are your major competitors out there, do you think?

Donsky: I guess Anderson in Lubbock.

Jenkins: In San Angelo are there any other substantial jewelry stores?

Donsky: Holland's.

Jenkins: That is the old one. He was there when you came?

Donsky: Yes.

Jenkins: How do they compare to you?

Donsky: Oh, no comparison.

Jenkins: Is that right? Is it still in the same family?

Donsky: It is the third generation.

Jenkins: But still in the family.

Donsky: Yes. They have two stores, but there is no comparison as volume is concerned.

Jenkins: Okay, let's go into employee relations. When you have gone out to find someone to manage for you, do you have anything in mind? What are you looking for?

Donsky: I had this man who was a bookkeeper. I started him out at \$70 a week. The first week I paid him \$100. He had been on \$100 a week for many, many years, but his bonus was unbelievable. I finally talked him into raising his salary and less bonus. Now he makes as much as any manager of most stores. I won't mention money, but he is very well rewarded. Now we have a profit sharing plan that we put in about 8 or 9 years ago. And for every year of service you get 10 points. For every \$1,000 you get 10 points. So Al Staudt, the watchmaker, in Brownwood that has been there 42 years gets 420 points. It is the same thing as \$42,000. That is added to his salary, and that is what he participates in.

Jenkins: Now you are talking about managers?

Donsky: I am talking about every employee. Every employee participates in the profit sharing. Until it was incorporated I wasn't involved in it. It was strictly all theirs. Now they have quite a bit of money in the profit sharing plan. We invested in no stock. The Republic National Bank handles it, and it is in money market and things that

are high-yield. It made about 16½ percent last year. The people with longevity reap pretty good money.

Jenkins: Regardless of what they do in the store.

Donsky: Regardless of what they do. Everybody participates the same way. They get 10 points for each year's service, and they get 10 points for each \$1,000.

Jenkins: Each \$1,000 of salary and bonus.

Donsky: Salary and bonus for those who get bonus.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Donsky: So the total comes about and that is many points. My manager received, I guess, \$10,000 or \$12,000 last year from profit sharing.

Jenkins: When you choose a manager, what kind of personal characteristics are you looking for?

Donsky: The man was under me and I was very active, and I was turning little by little over to him. A man has to know what I think. He can tell you what I think, and he knows what I think, and he knows what I go for. Big people are never big. Small people are big. Everybody needs everybody. Those are the theories that they have to possess. They must be honest, tell the truth all the time and never exaggerate. I do not have employees that are big shots. Now we employ a lot of school people parttime going to college.

Jenkins: Have you ever had unions involved at all?

Donsky: No.

Jenkins: Okay. Do you have any particular kind of management style? Do you think of yourself as any particular kind of manager?

Donsky: No, I am Nathan, owner of the store. I am not Mr. Donsky.

Jenkins: But I mean do you think of yourself as having a particular approach to managing?

Donsky: I am not a good supervisor. I am too soft. Advantage is taken of me.

Jenkins: Something has paid off, however. I will ask you later about that. What has been your approach to advertising?

Donsky: We do a tremendous amount of advertising, newspaper advertising, that kind of thing. We do radio, television advertising. We advertise giveaway deals. We advertise in the Texas Monthly. Oh, different types of advertising. Our best advertising is mouth to mouth.

Jenkins: You are still talking about Nathan's.

Donsky: Nathan's. I don't talk too much on Sterling.

Jenkins: Most of what you say deals with Nathan's. Let's look at government regulations. Do you get involved in OSHA, for instance, Occupational Safety?

Donsky: No.

Jenkins: How about EEOC? Ever had a brush with them? Are there any particular regulations concerning your type of business?

Donsky: No, we just treat the women and men alike. That is all you have to do.

Jenkins: Are there any particular government regulations directed toward the jewelry business?

Donsky: I am sure there are some, but we haven't had any conflicts.

Jenkins: Your present role in Nathan's is what?

Donsky: I am chairman of the board. I am on the phone every day. I talk to San Angelo every day for an hour, 30 minutes, 40 minutes, what is going on, what are suggestions, different things. I talk to Brownwood every day, the same thing. I go over there several times a year. I would go more often if I hadn't had these operations. I am going to go down there now. It is a very peculiar situation. The fire department in San Angelo, the fire chief, wants to give a barbecue, wants to honor me, and I don't know why except for the things we do for them. They want to make me an honorary chief. They gave me a fire chief hat, a firecap in white leather and a plaque with my name on it as Fire Chief. They want to do something there. Now I was the Citizen of the Year many years back after a long deal, you see. We have helped every organization, Jewish and non-Jewish. Our philosophy is that everybody needs everybody, and we try to help with every cause. Did you know that most Jewish merchants put up the money for National Jewish Hospital in Denver, where about 97% of the people go that are non-Jewish. And nobody pays at A.M.C., which was Jewish Consumptive today that are working on cancer. We used to have people to come to San Angelo with T.B. at

Carlsbad near San Angelo. Carlsbad would keep them 3 months and then release them. Then they would come to me, and I would instead of going through Dallas to Stanley Marcus or some other big shot, I would get on the phone, and I would call Denver. And I would get them into Denver. I would have to put up the money to guarantee their return home. You never get that money back besides the donation. And then we gave a room to the Jewish J.C.R.S., which is now American Medical Center. In fact the Dallas chapter is named in honor of my sister here in Dallas and my brother-in-law who died, Harry Kaplan, it is called the Bess and Harry Kaplan Chapter of the American Medical Center here in Dallas, just before he died they called it that. And she does a tremendous amount of work on that. But anyway, I went overboard to do different things to show. Wealthy people don't give much money. The people that made money recently are charitable. The rich people aren't. Like when I raised the money for the Catholic Hospital. I went around, and I couldn't talk anything from wealthy people. I finally got one rancher to give \$5,000 with a deal that he would give \$1,000 each year, and that if he died before the \$5,000 his estate didn't pay anything. He lived out the \$5,000 and died later. That is the whole thing.

Jenkins: Do you have any particular plans or visions for the future for Nathan's?

Donsky: No, I don't know. I am 76 years old. I don't want to sell

my store. I am afraid that if I pass away, I don't think my wife would keep it. And I don't know if my son has the time to oversee it. But I would hate to sell it to a chain and have it go down the drain. If Zales bought it it would go down the drain.

Jenkins: So you would like for it to stay in the family.

Donsky: I would like for it to stay in business. Maybe I could work a deal for Sterling to run it, I don't know.

Jenkins: How do you account for the success of Nathan's, your success?

Donsky: I think a lot of it is having the right wife, having fate, and faith in people, and being fair and telling the truth, and having friends and making friends and helping others. I have helped a lot of people, and have got hung, but that doesn't keep me from continuing to help others.

Jenkins: Now you have spoken of a lot of these, but I am wondering if there are any that you have left out. Your involvement in civic, community, trade associations. You talked to a lot of those.

Donsky: I was very active in the Texas Youth Development Foundation, which is the 4-H, which had the home at Lake Brownwood. In fact I was in Brownwood at the time President Kennedy was assassinated and we were talking to them about getting the land. I helped raise the money to build that. I have always been active in that, and I have always been active

in the Variety Club for a number of years. Very active in the Kidney Foundation of Texas. I used to raise about 30% of the money they raised. I did a good job for raising money for the Variety Club for their telethon. And active in Jewish affairs, and active in a number of things to help others.

Jenkins: How about trade associations? Have you ever gotten involved in trade associations?

Donsky: Oh, yes. We belong to the Chamber of Commerce and help them out with different things. We have gone to their Chamber of Commerce banquet. My manager still goes to all of the different things.

Jenkins: But you never ran for office or anything?

Donsky: No.

Jenkins: How about public office?

Donsky: No, I was a director twice for two years on the Chamber of Commerce Board of City Development.

Jenkins: You are talking about San Angelo.

Donsky: San Angelo.

Jenkins: How about Dallas? Have you gotten involved much?

Donsky: I was a director of the Kidney Foundation of Texas. I was a director of Variety Club. I am a lifetime member of Boys Ranch in San Angelo. I bought the first life membership for Boys Ranch.

Jenkins: Are there any other local clubs like Kiwanis or anything?

Donsky: No.

Jenkins: Anything else along that line that you can think of?

Donsky: I used to belong to Lions Club. I never went. I paid dues.

Jenkins: Have you been involved much in other business ventures besides Nathan's and Sterling?

Donsky: No, the only thing I was involved was a few oil deals.

Jenkins: Just investments, you were not involved in those.

Donsky: No.

Jenkins: What kind of reading habits do you have?

Donsky: I used to read a lot, but I can't now on account of I have cataracts.

Jenkins: What kind of reading did you do?

Donsky: Not too much reading. In other words I was too busy. I put in too many hours in the business.

Jenkins: I think the answer to this is very obvious, but I will ask you. What about your attitude toward retirement?

Donsky: No retirement. I will retire when I die, because I think a person makes the biggest mistake. My wife asked me for years to sell, sell, retire. That is the worst thing I could do. I would have nothing to occupy my time. My brother runs the store here. The one in Houston runs that. The only time I got involved was financial here, and when he needs me I will come in. But as far as San Angelo is concerned, that is my life, and that means more to me. I could have had a chain. One time I had six

stores. I could have had a chain of stores. But the San Angelo store was my life. It still is. I get a bigger thrill out of what they do. It is unbelievable; the volume of business that they do is so unbelievable it is unrealistic. In a thousand years I would never have thought it. They do so much more than what the six stores did it is not even funny.

Jenkins: I have been to San Angelo, but I really don't know the town. I need to get up there.

Donsky: I will show you a picture of the store.

In conclusion two things have played an important part in our lives (my wife and I). That is FAITH and FATE, more especially FATE. First deciding to leave my secretarial job in Dallas to move to San Angelo to get away from the gambling crowd. Second, deciding to stop off in San Angelo after I left Hobbs, New Mexico and visiting my cousin Freda Ray (Mrs. Abe Ray). At the time her father, Jacob Winer, was in San Angelo and she was the one that talked to Max Goren and then talked her father into loaning me \$500 to go in business with Max Goren. Had it not been for Freda Ray I wouldn't have gotten the loan from her father nor gone into the pawn shop business. Third, making friends with Leon Fine who was really responsible for me opening Nathan's Jewelers and without him none of these things we have done would have been possible at all

had I remained in partnership with Max Goren, I couldn't have been as successful. It was Leon Fine's confidence in me that enabled me to be successful as he made it possible for me to borrow money to operate on as without this we could not have been successful. Fourth and the most important is being a good fellow and allowing my employee to take off to go to Dallas for New Years and in this way I couldn't go, fate played again as going to Abilene instead and meeting my wife and getting married twenty-nine days later happened. I probably would not have been alive if it hadn't been for her tender care as I wouldn't have gone to New York and had the stomach operation. I more than likely wouldn't be here now, and all the good things we have done was encouraged by her and some originated by her. Without her I would not have two wonderful children, Cal and Linda, and four grandchildren, Robin, Jeffrey, Elizabeth and Joy. Fifth, in November 1939 I hemorrhaged from an ulcer and had to have three transfusions and was unable to work for sometime, so my wife talked my brother Abe into leaving his job as Manager of Glazer Wholesale Liquor in Longview and moving to San Angelo to help run Nathan's Jewelers with her, as she had to spend a lot of time at home taking care of me. Abe, better known as Honey, helped increase the volume of business and took complete charge of the Credit Department, which was very important. The store could not have

operated well during my illness without him. Sixth, trying to take care of Dee Atkinson, a watchmaker, as I only had room for one watchmaker and since I replaced him while he was out very ill and not expecting him back at work and when he had an unexpected recovery, and wanting to see that he was taken care of and sending him out to look for a small location in Ballinger, Coleman or Brownwood so that he and his wife could operate a small watch repair shop with a small amount of jewelry and him finding a location in Brownwood. This enabled me to drive down on a Sunday and lease this building on Baker Street for \$40.00 per month and later on Camp Bowie deciding to open up in Brownwood with 40,000 soldiers. This was all fate as we did not plan or know about this. Having Leon Fine drive to Brownwood and leasing the building at 309 Center forty-two years ago. Seventh, opening this large jewelry store on Center and hiring my brother-in-law R. B. Slaton as manager, and giving him an open hand in buying because had he not bought in crazy quantities I would not have had the large allowance during the war that I had, as all my deliveries were based on previous purchases. Eighth, hiring my brother Ervin and sister Ida as manager and assistant manager when R. B. Slaton left my Brownwood store. We would not have prospered as well as we did and Ervin would not have learned the jewelry business. Ervin did an exceptionally good job running the store

even though he had very little experience. He made a lot of improvements while there and put in a marble front together with a carpenter that still is being used even though we remodeled the building we could not improve on the front. He also increased the volume of business and therefore he would not have moved to Dallas and opened Sterling and the expansion of Sterling would not have happened and neither would there be a Houston Jewelry and Distributing Company and the lives of many people would be different. Ninth, my going to my first 4-H and FFA auction and seeing the rich boys and girls sheep sell for a high price as grandfathers or relatives would bid on them, and feeling sorry for the poor boys and girls and having started out poor and deciding to make the poor boy or girl's animal bring as much or more than the rich boys or girls. If we were doing this for business we would have bought the rich boys or girls animals as they had money to spend and the poor ones could not spend money. This was over 40 years ago and there isn't anything that has been more rewarding than knowing that you are doing something for the ones who need it, and today the ones that were poor are very successful ranchers and business people and are our best customers. We are now buying animals from grandchildren of the grandparents we bought from. It reminds me "Cast your bread on the water and it

comes back ten fold." Another phrase "Everyone needs everyone" is very true and has been proven many times, as had it not been for Leon Fine there wouldn't be any Nathan's Jewelers and other business and we wouldn't have been able to do the things we have done. Fate helped us out in 1945. We hired G. W. Bundren as bookkeeper and over the years he became very knowledgeable and we are fortunate to have someone like him capable of running our business as the business has continued to increase and I am able to move to Dallas and turn over the operation of both stores to him, only using the telephone for major decisions. Faith has been very important in our lives as it took a lot of hard work and faith for my wife to pull me through many dangerous operations. We have always been strong believers in God and try to do good things for others to show our appreciation. A person has to have a lot of faith to sell jewelry on credit as over 70% of our business in San Angelo and Brownwood is on credit. We have always tried to treat others like we ourselves would like to be treated, regardless of the way some people act.

Jenkins: Is there anything that I should have asked you and didn't?

Donsky: No, not that I can think of.

Jenkins: If not we will end the interview here, and I thank you for an interesting session.