

MANUEL: Every year Dave took Diane to New York. The year that Roosevelt got elected, on his way home, everyone he talked to thought Peoria would soon be the best city in the U. S. for business, because Roosevelt had promised to end prohibition.

Neal lived in Vandalia at the time. He wanted to move to a town where he could give his children a Jewish education, and there was a Jewish community in Peoria. Dave stopped at Neal's house for lunch on the way home from New York, and told him what he had heard about Peoria. He took Diane home to Collinsville, and the next morning at 4AM, Dave was back in Vandalia. He brought Harry along. They picked Neal up and they went to Peoria.

In Peoria there were a lot of empty stores for rent. The one they picked out, which was in a perfect location wanted \$500 a month rent. That was too much. So they stopped at another place, 814 South Adams. They were eating their lunch in the car and they saw a sign on the



door: For Rent. The man who was in charge came out and showed them the building. The building had 30,000 square feet of space and he priced it at \$300 a month. Harry offered him \$150 monthly for the first five years. The man said he'd let him know tomorrow. Neal thought Harry's bid was too low and the man didn't want to insult him. However the next day, at 11 O clock, the man called Collinsville and agreed to rent the building to the Fredmans for \$150 a month.

I, Manuel, was putting in my time at the Vandalia 5 and 10 cents store, and I came to the furniture store to help out when they got busy. The next time Dave and Harry came to Vandalia they talked about Neal moving to Peoria. The question was what do we do with this store?

Neal told them that Manuel is capable of running it. Neal took off for Peoria with his family within the month. He moved into the house on Moss Avenue. That was in 1934, in the middle of the depression. Most of



our customers were poor farmers. At that time the Roosevelt government bought Pigs and threw them into the sea in order to keep their price up. The year before Neal turned the Vandalia store over to me it showed a loss of \$1800. People weren't buying much furniture.

THE STORE WAS ON GALLATIN STREET ACROSS FROM THE OLD STATE CAPITOL(Vandalia was Illinois second capitol)



I looked around and decided that the item we sold that was most essential for people was a heating stove to keep the house warm. I knew that the store in Bellville and Collinsville were loaded with stoves whose fire boxes had burned out. At that time we could order a fire box from Sheply Hardware in St. Louis for \$3. The putty that was used to install it cost another



50 cents. Labor was very cheap. Men worked for \$8 a week. I hired all the men I could get during the summer time to take stoves apart and put new fire boxes in them, which made the stoves mechanically perfect. Each time we sold a stove wed take another in trade, so we could keep up our stock. Every Thursday and Sunday a truck and I would go to the other Fredman stores and pick up all their worn heating stoves. I also bought them any place I could, paying at most, \$5 a piece. One day I was late to open the store and Dr. Miller Greer had just finished eating breakfast at Mayberry's Cafe, next door. When I came over he saw



all these people waiting for me to open the store. I employed 18 people a day at the time. He said "Manuel, what are you doing with so many people. Do you have a Coal mine there?"

I explained what I was doing.

When the year was up my share of the profits was \$8400 and they sent me papers to fill out for income tax.

I went upstairs to the justice of the

peace, Judge Myers. When he saw how much I made he was so surprised. He said no one in Vandalia makes that kind of money. (His voice was indignant. His words sounded like an accusation. His words frightened Manuel.) (\$8,400.00 in 1934 had the same buying power as \$153,638.55 in 2017)

Because of his reaction, I decided never to show him my income again.



Two years later Dr. Giber found out the profit on the Vandalia store was \$32,000 and he came to Vandalia to see for himself what that greenhorn was doing.



MAX

(\$32,000.00 in 1934 had the same buying power as **\$585,289.70** in 2017)



The Peoria Store

Peoria did unusually good, because they were the first to advertise on to radio they employed 50 people. Neal came over and said to me, we decided to take you in as a partner. At this point you're doing good. At some time in the future you may not be doing so well and we might be doing good. It will all even out in the long run. I was happy to become a partner.

About 1940 the boys decided to become a corporation. At that time I hadn't saved much money. I didn't feel I was entitled to as many shares as they were because they owned the whole thing. I had opened the Centralia and Salem stores in the firm's name. At the time I was a fourth owner in the firm, but I had no money and felt they owned the whole thing. Therefore I became a sixteenth partner, instead of a fourth partner. I always earned the same salary as the original partners.

MEANWHILE HARRY AND NEIL SETTLED IN PEORIA ILLINOIS



**FRONT DAVE
EDDIE CANTOR
HARRY (CLARA
BACK LEFT;
MILDRED BACK
RIGHT**

**AT THE OPENING OF THE
PEORIA STORE**





NEIL MANUEL HARRY
DAVE HARRY MANUEL



GALLATIN STREET VANDALIA





Manuel's travels

The late August **1930 Dominican Republic Hurricane** was the fifth [deadliest Atlantic hurricane](#) on record: 50,000 to 100,000 persons were homeless and the whole population was in dire need of food and medical supplies

Manuel's -- Dominican passport was issued on December 13, 1930

April 17, 1931 Manuel arrived in Miami by air from Santa Domingo.

A year later, on June 5, 1932 Sydine and Manuel married.

6 weeks later on July 22, 1932, Manuel Crossed from Detroit into Windsor Ontario (alone).

On August 22, 1932 - he obtained a visa to travel from Havana to Santo Domingo, and on Sept 4, 1932 – Manuel departed to Havana Cuba by ship (alone)

Two days later, on Sept 6, 1932 - he returned from Havana Cuba to Key West (alone).

According to Ronnie Reisler, Sydine was concerned when Manuel left in July 1932, the month after the wedding, and didn't come back for while. She told Ron that she wasn't entirely sure if he was going to come back. And “she wasn't sure that the marriage was going to work out. “