

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Philip E. Witham

Date 2006 September 5

Primary Maker Philip E. Witham

Medium digitized audio cassette tape

Description Audio cassette tape of an interview with Philip E. Witham. He was interviewed on September 5, 2006 by Bruce M. Stave and Sondra Astor Stave for the G. Fox Oral History Project at his home in Newington, Connecticut. Witham was born in 1930 in Washburn, Maine. He moved to Connecticut at age 6 and grew up in the Hartford area. He attended Naylor School, Washington Street School, and Weaver High School in Hartford. He studied elementary education at Central Connecticut State University and business administration at Tunxis Community College through the G. I. Bill. After earning his degree, he was employed as a substitute teacher. He describes his memories of visiting G. Fox & Co. as a child. He applied for a job at G. Fox in 1946 at age 16 during Christmas-time as a stock clerk in the toy department. He made 50 cents an hour. He stated the most important guidelines were "The customer is always right." and "Always be polite to the customers because the customers are important." He described his interactions with Beatrice Fox Auerbach. In 1950, Witham joined the U. S. Air Force, where he served for four and a half years. He did not serve overseas during the Korean War. He then spent four years out of the Armed Forces and worked at Pratt and Whitney as a photographer. From 1958-1962, Witham then enlisted a second time in the Air Force and was stationed in Japan (1958-1960)

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and Florida (1960-1962). He then returned to Pratt and Whitney until 1971.

Witham also worked seasonally in the G. Fox warehouse, where he moved stock from the warehouse to the store. He was paid \$1.50 an hour in this position. He did receive a 10% staff discount at G. Fox. He compares a department store he visited in Japan to G. Fox. He describes how he and his friends visited the 9th Floor of G. Fox to listen to records in the record booth. Witham describes how he experience as a customer changed after the May Company purchased G. Fox in 1965. Delivery of purchases from the store was eliminated, but the quality of goods stayed the same. Witham shopped at both the downtown location and the location in the mall. He discusses the changes that occurred in downtown Hartford in the 1960s during the period of urban renewal when buildings were torn down. He discusses the quality of customer service before malls existed, such as his experience at Savitt Jewelers.

Dimensions Duration: 44 Minutes, 57 Seconds