



Clifford Tremblay (left) and son Bruce show off their shoe repair shop and handiwork located at 150A Fifth St. The shop, which was started by Clifford's father, Wilfred, is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Note the original cash register.

STAFF PHOTOS BY IAN KELSO

## 50 years of 'sole'

*Tremblays keep Lakeshore residents well-heeled*



Son gives father a shoe shine. Having clean shoes is important to those in the business, and Clifford Tremblay probably gets a discount. Regular price for shines is \$1.

Nestled in the hub of the Lakeshore's retail community is a small piece of borough history straight out of the 1920s.

Tremblay's Shoe Repair began in 1929 when Wilfred Tremblay opened a one-storey frame shop on Fifth St. He probably never guessed the business would span three generations and five decades.

Several thousand shoe repairs later, his son, Clifford and grandson, Bruce, are tending the shop much the same way Wilfred did.

The 1906 Singer patching and stitching machines are the originals Wilfred bought half a century ago. The brass cash register Clifford and Bruce operate is the same one Wilfred used to tally his customers' accounts. Even the shoes Clifford repairs these days are reminiscent of a bygone era.

"The high, spiked heels the girls are wearing these days are the same ones I worked on when I started at the shop at 16," says the senior Tremblay, 52.

Everything in the shop has an aura of days past including bric-a-brac like the 1930 pendulum clock Wilfred Tremblay bought almost 50 years ago with a \$2 deposit.

"I'm the only thing in this store that isn't an antique," quips 25-year-old Bruce.

The shop's massive shoe shine chair once belonged to the CNE's horse palace. It helped Wilfred survive the

lean Depression years with 10-cent shine jobs. Inflation has since upped the price to \$1.

"We still get some of my dad's original customers. They're quite elderly now, but they remember me as a small kid," says Clifford.

Despite the changing times, Tremblay's Shoe Repair is going as well today as it did during the war years, the boom days of shoe mending.

"We have a lot of ethnic people in this area and working people have always had their shoes repaired to stretch the dollar," adds Clifford.

Bruce estimates the cost of shoe repair is about one-fifth the amount for a new pair of shoes.

The father and son team also repairs handbags, luggage and sharpens skates.

"Most of our clientele has been brought up in the Lakeshore area. Some of them move away, but remember the shop," explains Clifford. "It's a good place business-wise. A few years ago the big malls drew some customers away. They're starting to come back."

Not surprisingly, the Tremblays operate one of the oldest family businesses in the borough.

"I have a young daughter. Everyone's liberated these days so who knows? Maybe she'll be in here one day," says Bruce.