



Randy Kroop is a fourth-generation shoe and boot maker. Her family name is synonymous with high quality leather boots. As a teenager, Randy's grandfather, Adolph Michael Kroop, known as "Mitch," emigrated from Latvia, Northern Europe and made his way to Baltimore, Maryland; where he opened his first shop, near Pimlico Park, in 1907. He later moved to set up shop on Main Street in Ellicott City and in 1927 he took occupancy in a building on Laurel's Main Street. By the 1960's he expanded and relocated operations to the leather factory building, A.M. Kroop and Sons, on C Street. Being located near Laurel Park, Kroop specialized in riding boots for jockeys, who required very sturdy yet lightweight boots in sizes much smaller than the typical man's shoe. Having learned to cobble from his father, Mitch taught his sons the trade, while his daughter helped with bookkeeping.



Laurel Historical Society Celebrates Women's History Month and Salutes Contributions and History Makers in Our Community

Randy was very skilled in sewing and made many of her own clothes growing up. Her talent, work ethic, and hands-on attitude were a perfect fit when it came time for the next generation to take over. At the time, the horse racing industry was changing, so Randy also began to specialize in helping people with problem feet or those wearing braces, to have custom shoes that actually fit. She remembers these experiences as very rewarding. Randy inherited ten employees who had worked with her father and/or grandfather. At first, it was difficult to manage employees, as many of them had watched her grow up from a little girl. Although, the Kroops lived in Baltimore, they were one of about only five Jewish families working in Laurel, at the time. Randy remembers that her father and grandfather often hired refugees or immigrants, including other Jewish families. Over the years, she took on new employees but by the time Randy retired in 2019, she was the sole employee. She still keeps in touch with some of the grandchildren of her employees. Randy recollected the time a former employee, the first female hired by her grandfather, chose for her 80th birthday to return to Laurel (from Delaware) and visit the factory. Likewise, while keeping busy in retirement, Randy misses her old family shop. She has donated many items to the Laurel Historical Society and generously adds to our knowledge of family businesses that have celebrated being in business "for upward of a century."

Information and photograph pulled from LHS collection files and oral interview with Randy Kroop, 2021.