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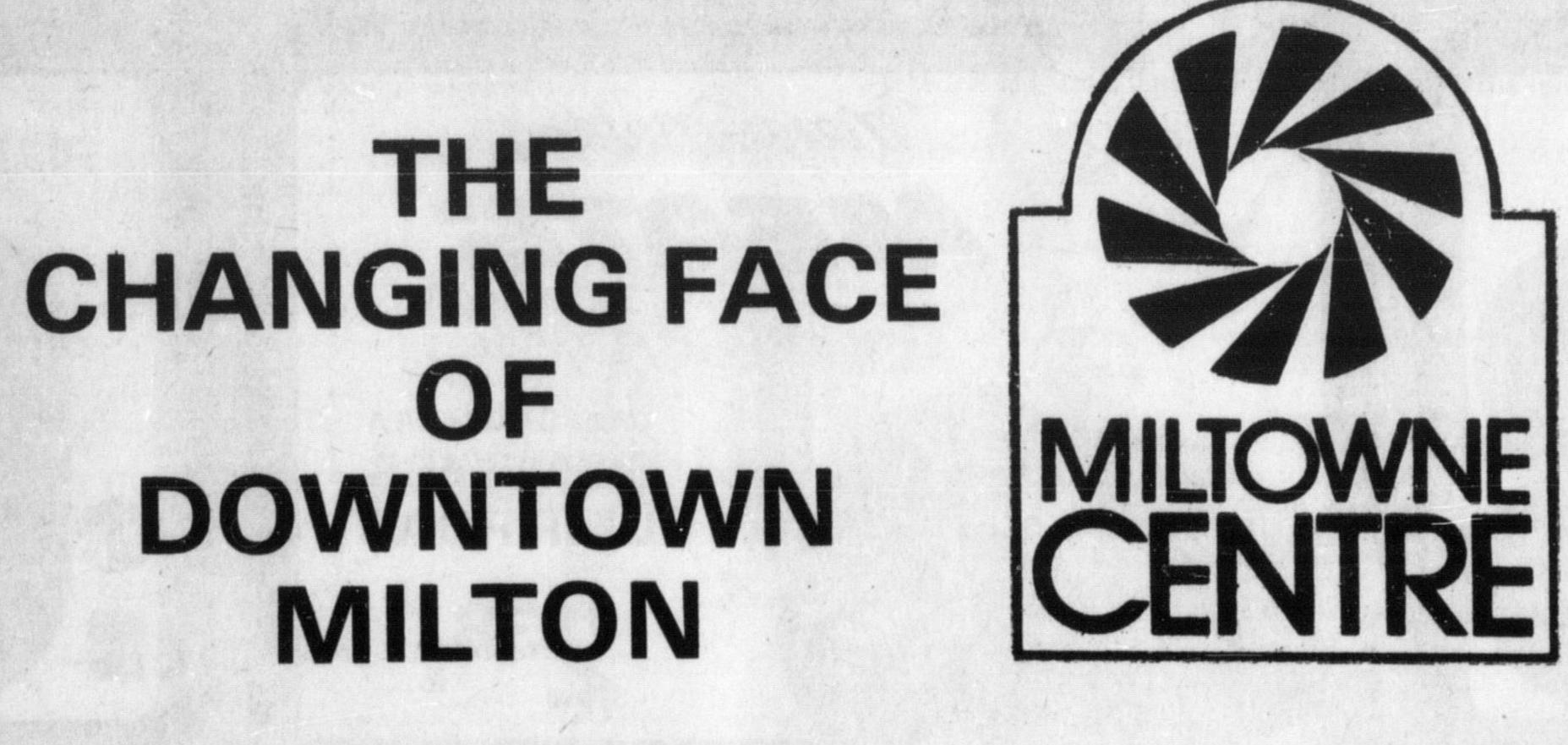
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The face of downtown Milton is changing—for the better. Recent improvements to the streetscape have made it a more attractive place to shop, and several new retail shops are coming to complement the good mix of existing stores. Milton's charming town core boasts a variety of goods and services, friendly clerks and comparative prices. Each week on this page, we invite you to meet and learn a little more about the background and philosophy of the individual stores, their services and their people.



Elio Manera of Elio's Footwear fits a young customer.

ELIO'S FOOTWEAR

by Jo Ann Smith

Elio Manera knows quality when he sees it. He should. Mr. Manera began his career in Italy over thirty years ago as an apprentice shoemaker.

Now, as the owner of Elio's at 221 Main St., Mr. Manera tries to continue his tradition of dealing in quality footwear. "I stick to selling leather as much as I can," said Mr. Manera.

"I like quality. But people nowadays don't know the difference. They think because they're paying less they're getting a bargain.'

"If you go for quality you can still get the same shoe as you would have bought 30 years ago. I carry some of these. I'd like to carry more if people would buy them more often."

Mr. Manera sells ladies Blue Cross dress shoes, men's Florshiem, Dacks and Jarman brands as well as some sports

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needs. But . . . there's an instant message of elegance and a

deft difference as fashion faces function. The difference is

shoes. He carries a large selection of cowboy boots and also sells a full line of shoe care products.

Mr. Manera began in Milton 25 years ago as a shoe repair-man and continued this trade until seven years ago. At that time he decided to move to 221 Main St. where he set up his present store. He admits to missing working with his hands especially since he knows that shoemaking and shoe repairs are a dying craft.

Mr. Manera still takes some repairs at his shop which he passes on to a friend. He does this as a service to his customers who would otherwise have to travel out of the area to get repairs done.

"I like to keep the customers in town," said Mr. Manera. "If they have to go somewhere else for shoe repairs they'll do the rest of the shopping while they're there.'

When he first moved to his present location, Mr. Manera sold only men's shoes and work boots. However, industries soon started to supply steel-toe boots to their employees by means of a truck which travels directly to the factory. This cut drastically into Mr. Manera's business, so at this point he

expanded to include women's footwear. Mr. Manera feels that one of the valuable services he can offer customers is a good shoe fitting. As a former shoemaker he knows how a shoe should fit.

"Many chain stores hire an average type of man or student to sell shoes," said Mr. Manera. "I think I have a much better idea of fitting."

He carries five different widths for some of his shoes and can even custom order some sizes.

"If I have a few customers looking for a certain size I'll get it in especially," said Mr. Manera.

Being a privately owned store doesn't inhibit the selection at Elio's. Mr. Manera has customers come from up to 20 miles away for sizes they can't get anywhere else.

"Some customers have told me I have as good a selection as anyone," he said. Mr. Manera also believes he caters to a wide range of customers.

"Some chain stores only care for young people," he said. "They go for less quality-it's quick money since young people are the ones buying.

Mr. Manera's wife, Veulia, also helps out in the store a few hours a day. His children Grace 22, Robert 21, and Lisa 16, give occasional assistance.

Elio's is open for business four days a week from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Thursdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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