

COLUMBUS AVENUE AND THE UPPER WEST SIDE  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Bill Bailey and Laurie Eichengreen

Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District

2019

## PREFACE

The following is a transcript of the second of two sessions of an oral history interview with Bill Bailey (known as Bailey) and Laurie Eichengreen conducted by Leyla Vural on July 23, 2019. This interview is part of the Columbus Avenue and the Upper West Side Oral History Project, sponsored by the Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District.

Bailey (born in 1939) and Laurie Eichengreen (born in 1943) owned and ran Mythology, an art project-*cum*-eclectic store, on Columbus Avenue from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s.

In this interview, Bailey and Eichengreen continue the story of Mythology. They describe how they expanded the store and designed its interior. They recall some of their innovations, which included book openings and creative window displays that changed every night. They reminisce about some of the regular customers, among them Robin Williams, and talk about the importance of the friendships that they made through the store. Bailey and Eichengreen reflect on their role in the neighborhood and on the continuing evolution of the Upper West Side.

The interviewees have reviewed, edited, and approved this transcript. Readers should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of an interview and, therefore, does not read like a polished piece of written work. Time codes have been included to make it easier for readers to match the transcript with the audio recording of the interview. Time codes may, however, no longer be completely accurate because of edits to the transcript. Where there are differences between the transcript and the audio recording, the transcript is the final document of record.

The views expressed in this oral history interview are the interviewee's alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District.

**Interviewees:** Bill Bailey and Laurie Eichengreen

**Interviewer:** Leyla Vural

**Interview date:** July 23, 2019

**Session:** 2 of 2

**Location:** New York, N.Y.

**Eichengreen:** [00:00:00] I was just curious if there were certain aspects you wanted to hear.

**Vural:** [00:00:04] I do. So, let me just say for the recording that it's Tuesday, July 23rd, 2019, and this is Leyla Vural conducting a second interview with Laurie Eichengreen and Bailey in their apartment on the Upper West Side for the Columbus Avenue and Upper West Side Oral History Project.

[00:00:20] So, what I wanted us to do is talk a little bit more about the store: what it was, how you ran it, how it fit into the neighborhood, and how it evolved. Before the recording you were just telling me about the awning. So, maybe you could describe it to me again and tell me the story of how you got your awning in the first place.

**Bailey:** [00:00:48] Well, it was a very nondescript storefront and it was one of many in the whole block. And most of them were those sliding gates that went across the whole front and they were all rusty and you couldn't see anything inside. They were dark in the daytime and dark at night. So, one of the most important things was to make ourselves distinctive in this format that existed—that almost looked like jail rails across the whole block—and that here was a friendly spot that maybe you might be able to, you know, poke your nose in or actually walk into. And the only way to do it would be to make an awning that made a nice, bright, strong, visually dynamic statement that you could see from across the street, which was actually the rear or south end of the [American] Museum of Natural History.

[00:02:09] So, we set out—we had a logo already going, that I made, which was a cloud and a star, and then we just added some type to it that said “Mythology,” which dropped down on the little bar that drops down on awnings that hang over the street. There were little scallops on it, and the lettering wasn’t straight. It went in a crooked way, the way you often saw things done with a rubber stamp, and they weren’t always lined up because you couldn’t line it up, so it was more casual and friendly and had a handmade sensibility to it.

[00:02:57] And the biggest thing was that I wanted the clouds, the single cloud, and the star to be puffy and have a dynamic sense of three dimensions. And it went across the center of the awning and then sloped down on the left-hand side, sliding off and breaking the rectangular sense of a formal awning. And then there was a rainbow that kind of sliced across diagonally and it was made out of different colors, rainbow colors, from actual awning fabric. So, it was the vinyl instead of being a hand-painted rainbow. So, it had a lot of character of the way an awning is made as well as using only awning materials and nothing else about it.

[00:04:09] So, it worked. People actually came to see what was going on in this strange [chuckle]—underneath this strange awning. And it wasn’t a wide store. It was only three hundred feet wide.

**Eichengreen:** [00:04:23] No, it wasn’t three hundred feet.

**Bailey:** [00:04:24] What was it?

**Eichengreen:** [00:04:26] The whole square footage—

**Bailey:** [00:04:26] Oh, it was twenty feet.

**Eichengreen:** [00:04:27] —was three hundred-and-seventy-five. It was probably ten feet at best.

**Bailey:** [00:04:33] Nah, maybe fifteen.

**Eichengreen:** [00:04:34] It was ten by twenty—twelve by—

**Bailey:** [00:04:37] It was six hundred square feet, wasn't it?

**Eichengreen:** [00:04:38] No, no, no.

**Bailey:** [00:04:39] Three hundred—

**Eichengreen:** [00:04:39] The first store was three-fifty, three-seventy-five.

**Bailey:** [00:04:43] Okay, so it could have been ten by—

**Eichengreen:** [00:04:47] In those days, as you can tell from this photo [in a photo album]—I realize this is an oral history—but you can see that the street really looked like skid row. It was really somewhat terrifying to—

**Bailey:** [00:05:00] Yes, because the gratings in front of the stores matched the fire escapes that came down from above and the windows up there that was the only way to get out of the apartment buildings. So, you just had grillwork everywhere all over the building and this row across the bottom.

**Vural:** [00:05:25] Well, and I saw last time I was here you have a photo of the awning. And maybe I can take a picture and we can include that so that when people read or listen to the interview—

**Bailey:** [00:05:34] Yes, ah-ha.

**Vural:** [00:05:35] —they can also see an image.

[00:05:38] So, that would have been in the early seventies when you had the first space and the first—the awning just covering, right. So, I see what you're saying: the rainbow. That's beautiful. That's really beautiful. So, maybe I can take a picture and we can include that.

**Bailey:** [00:05:53] Yes, right.

**Vural:** [00:05:55] So, you knew the awning maker, you were saying?

**Eichengreen:** [00:05:59] He was a friend of a friend. And he had inherited the business from his parents and it was like the oldest awning-maker on West Fifty-second Street, the oldest awning-maker in the city. So, this is what he did.

**Vural:** [00:06:16] And do you remember if he thought it was—like what he thought of doing something that was so unusual?

**Bailey:** [00:06:21] Well, he was game for it. He liked the idea of pushing the edge of the envelope a little bit in awning-making, because they did so many awnings and it's just simple variations. You know, an awning is an awning is an awning. And he loved the idea of the guys in the shop having to [cough] work a little harder to figure out how to do it and actually follow a design that I did as to scale, rough scale, and then use their own sensibility to refine it into an excellent awning.

**Vural:** [00:07:03] Lovely. And—

**Bailey:** [00:07:03] And make it work.

**Vural:** [00:07:05] Did you have that for many years, then?

**Bailey:** [00:07:09] Oh, a long time, yes.

**Eichengreen:** [00:07:11] Well, we had it—when the store expanded in 1981, we became twice the size. So we had to then have another awning. And I’m trying to think of what’s—oh, that awning was much simpler and that was designed—wasn’t that designed by Lance [Wyman]?

**Bailey:** [00:07:34] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [00:07:35] And Lance said that he—Lance Wyman is a graphic designer who lived on, still lives on, West Eightieth Street—and we actually got to know him, as many of our friends, because they would stop by and introduce themselves. And we struck up friendships this way. It was wonderful.

[00:07:57] I have to say in the early days—Bailey and I knew each other from the early sixties and then we ran into one another actually at the corner of 79th and Broadway, and Bailey said, “Well, why don’t you come by and see me at my studio? I call it Mythology.”

[00:08:21] I have to say that I was a little reluctant. I mean, it wasn’t as though I was going up to some guy’s apartment and seeing his etchings. I was a little reluctant to go to Columbus. Columbus Avenue? I was living on West End [Avenue] and Seventy-ninth Street. To go to Columbus Avenue was like really a challenge. And I think with the awning, it made the street, or it made the store, or made the studio, personable, but a friendly retreat.

[00:09:06] Anyway, when we expanded in ’81, Lance was at the opera, or at the ballet, and he said, “Oh, I’ve just come up with an idea for you, what do you think?” And that’s what the second awning was about when it was over two stores as opposed to eventually we were over four store spaces in ’85.

**Bailey:** [00:09:32] And his design sensibility was totally different than mine, although we had become friends from the store. His studio was, and still is, world-renowned for its development of logos for businesses as well as museums and all sorts of—even cities, where he’s developed walkways through cities. And he actually did the signage that originally redirected everybody at the Museum of Natural History for all the different floors, and so a huge amount of work.

**Vural:** [00:10:13] So, when you expanded, you moved to the space to the north, right?

**Bailey:** [00:10:18] We went—

**Eichengreen:** [00:10:19] No, to the south.

**Bailey:** [00:10:21] —we went through the wall to the south.

**Vural:** [00:10:24] To the south. Is that—I see. I thought you were right next to the Museum Café on the corner.

**Eichengreen:** [00:10:30] No.

**Bailey:** [00:10:30] No.

**Vural:** [00:10:30] No. I see, okay.

**Bailey:** [00:10:31] No, there were a couple of buildings between us and there.

**Vural:** [00:10:35] Okay.

**Bailey:** [00:10:35] And it was a non-load-bearing wall. And Edith [Siegel] of Edith’s Nostalgia, who sold a lot of lamps and stuff, was dying to move out of there and move to—

**Eichengreen:** [00:10:51] She moved to Amsterdam [Avenue].



**Bailey:** [00:10:51] —Amsterdam Avenue because it was a hot avenue at the time. And we made her an offer she couldn't refuse, which was to move her, just to get a truck—

**Eichengreen:** [00:11:08] Physically.

**Bailey:** [00:11:08] —and physically take all the problems of moving. She would get the space, we would move her into it and make sure she was there, and pay her something for the turnover of the space and the lease.

[00:11:27] So, you know, it worked out. She found a nice space, we moved her, and we got twice as much space. Which we were pretty small, so twice as much space wasn't *big*, but it was twice as much space, and we could fill it really quickly with the kind of things we had.

**Vural:** [00:11:52] So, I'm going to ask you what did the awning look like that Lance designed?

**Eichengreen:** [00:11:56] Oh, here it is [shows photo in a photo album]

**Vural:** [00:11:57] So, can you describe it for me?

**Bailey:** [00:12:00] Yes, it's—he did a lot of logos—so, it's letters spelling “Mytholog” and then a mirror image of those seemingly the same letters but “New York” upside-down.

**Eichengreen:** [00:12:19] That was our logo. That was an image, Bailey. I don't mean to interrupt you, but here's the awning and it just said “Mythology.”

**Bailey:** [00:12:26] Oh, okay. Well—

**Vural:** [00:12:28] And it's big black letters with stars through.

**Bailey:** [00:12:31] Yes, right.

**Eichengreen:** [00:12:33] And it was two tones of blue.

**Bailey:** [00:12:38] And it was pretty impressive—that big [indicates storefront photo]. And again it had a little more corporate sensibility to it, but because of the liveliness of the stars scattering through it and the brightness of the blue and the lightness of the contrasting blue, it had a lot of bounce, you know, and kept moving all the time when you looked at it.

**Vural:** [00:13:04] So, were you both pleased with it?

**Bailey:** [00:13:06] Absolutely.

**Vural:** [00:13:07] Oh, my goodness.

**Bailey:** [00:13:07] It worked great and it made everybody aware that we were now a different store. And by this time, we had graduated in terms of the merchandise we were carrying—had a bigger range of price to it, and a lot of variety of things. So, it kind of helped make a statement that we're no longer just the friendly little store in the neighborhood with funky stuff, but we were getting serious about doing a business.

**Vural:** [00:13:43] So, this was 1981. So, who were you customers? Were they a lot of people coming from the museum?

**Eichengreen:** [00:13:51] I never got the sense, even though you could see us across Margaret Mead Park coming from the Museum of Natural History. I felt that we really became a destination store, and it was word of mouth. So, we attracted all sorts of people. And a lot of people I think came—it was right—I'm not sure about the sequence of dates, but the whole avenue changed once DD—I mentioned this before—DDL Foodshow moved in in The Endicott and that expanded the whole sense of the avenue. And it wasn't so that there were occasional

bright spots. It was a whole continuum of entrepreneurs and small shopkeepers, and that was what drew people to the area.

[00:14:51] And I think at that time, too, which really made sense for us to expand, is that the neighborhood *really* began to change and *really* became more gentrified. So, it was not that scary sense that we had in the mid-seventies. I think I—

**Bailey:** [00:15:12] Yes, the single room occupancy buildings started to get purchased by people that wanted to make them into apartment buildings, you know, and *real* apartments, not just fast-turnover apartments. And that started to influence the customer base that was up and down the street, and more frequent visitors of the—more frequent visits by the same person, you know, looking for something for a birthday present or whatever. And that helped expand the whole sense of Columbus Avenue as a shopping place. And there was a variety.

**Eichengreen:** [00:16:01] And also it was—I'm not sure of Michael's [Weinstein] and Ernie's dates for the Museum Café, but I believe that they opened around this time. And so *that* was another magnet. This whole block—well, you could go to this block and not be fearful.

[00:16:22] I know in the early days—I'm talking about the seventies—it was very hard to move those gates because the derelicts and the whomever were sleeping it off from the night before. And “Excuse me, I'd like to open the gate for my store,” you know. And that wasn't exactly an enticing way to bring people to the Upper West Side was to have those people around. So, I think there were fewer of them and the street *really* changed about that time.

**Vural:** [00:17:00] Yes. So, the restaurant opened in '75 or '76 and they renovated The Endicott in the very late seventies and people started to move into apartments I think in 1981. So, that's—

**Bailey:** [00:17:13] Yes.

**Vural:** [00:17:13] —as you’re remembering it, that’s what others have told me as well.

**Eichengreen:** [00:17:16] A-ha.

**Bailey:** [00:17:18] And also I don’t remember exactly the—I don’t remember the dates about anything—Laurie knows them—but when we first put the awning up, etcetera, the large store north of us was the warehouse for the hotdog vendors for Central Park and it was just a place that they parked their vending vehicles. And they would just pull them in there, off a large truck that had gone around and picked them up at the end of the day, shove them in there, and close the gates. And then the next morning fairly early they’d open the gates up again and load all these vending carts onto that truck again and they’d disburse them all over the city. So, it was like a dead space except for maybe two hours at night and two hours in the morning when there was activity there. So, it was really Deadsville.

**Vural:** [00:18:24] So, it was like a garage, but in the middle of the block.

**Eichengreen:** [00:18:26] Exactly.

**Bailey:** [00:18:26] It was at the end of the block really, at Seventy-eighth Street.

**Vural:** [00:18:30] At Seventy-eighth?

**Eichengreen:** [00:18:30] Well, but the Durst—Zabar-Durst buildings—

**Bailey:** [00:18:32] Yes, there was another building, a corner building, that took up some of the space. But I don’t know what time—they left, because the rent probably went up, and a woman that still lives in this building opened an antiques shop there.

**Eichengreen:** [00:18:48] Portobello Road.

**Bailey:** [00:18:50] So, that refreshed that area completely and at least there was a store there seven days a week selling antiques.

**Vural:** [00:19:01] And did you continue to use part of Mythology as a studio to make your own art?

**Bailey:** [00:19:08] For—

**Eichengreen:** [00:19:10] [Laughs] He tried.

**Bailey:** [00:19:10] I tried [chuckles], yes, for the first couple of years that it formally became a store. It was first a salon in which there was a workspace where I was silk-screening, there were—Door Store couch, and since it was a pretty narrow space, there was one counter that we had purchased upfront, which had whatever T-shirts I had made for the store in amongst the ones I was doing as a business for various people who wanted a T-shirt for their business.

**Vural:** [00:19:57] And the salon, did it function—this is how I picture salons—like people would come and talk about ideas and art or whatever.

**Bailey:** [00:20:05] Yes, just hang out. Right, exactly. And Laurie might be there and she'd have a conversation with two or three people and we gradually—it was the West Side, so there were a lot of interesting people moving in. Creative ideas were abundant.

**Eichengreen:** [00:20:29] I can say that one of our first disagreements was about removing the couch. I said, “Bailey, that is—” You know, I always had the vision that it was the salon of Gertrude Stein, you know, but we're just bringing it up to date. And he said, “Laurie, it can't be a store and have a couch here at the same time.” And we found a home for the couch, which was

really at one point his bed, I later learned, and we moved it out. But it was—oh, my gosh. You know, I was really very disappointed, very saddened that we lost that element.

[00:21:15] Little did I know that years later I would have to say to Bailey, “This is not a classroom. We’re here to make some money, if we can, and to sell something.” Because Bailey then was teaching *anyone* who would come and listen the history of art or to show them how to look at something, which is really what the store was about—that we made these visual associations and it happened to be through product. Nobody—people came to the store and they said, “Oh, this little tchotchke here and that little tchotchke there,” but the overall philosophy was one of a visual—really a visual art piece.

[00:22:05] And I think one of the first places that Bailey took me was to—Claes Oldenburg had done a store on Madison Avenue in which it was—we would call it today a pop-up store. But he—you walked into this space, and it was a store. Nothing was for sale, but it—

**Bailey:** [00:22:28] Oh, it was for sale, if you had—

**Eichengreen:** [00:22:30] The money—

**Bailey:** [00:22:30] —the money to buy it.

**Eichengreen:** [00:22:31] —or the big bucks to buy it.

**Bailey:** [00:22:34] But it was his large, inflato pretzels and potato chips and telephones and fans and all that stuff you now see in museums around the world. But he made it into a store and it was the first chance that people had that weren’t museum-goers to access his work and to see, wow, this is strange-looking stuff and pretty interesting, too. And he also did happenings in the

store. They'd push all the merchandise to the side and they'd have an event night and somebody would perform, you know, some esoteric topic that fit right in with the merchandise.

[00:23:26] So, our store had a sensibility of that going on. And I remember one Halloween night we had—

**Eichengreen:** [00:23:41] Ah. Jerry Nelson.

**Bailey:** [00:23:43] —Jerry Nelson, one of the wildest of the Muppet character-makers, and he came into the store and performed for about an hour, something he called Brandenburg Gate or—

**Eichengreen:** [00:24:04] I want to say Checkpoint Charlie.

**Bailey:** [00:24:05] Checkpoint Charlie. Checkpoint Charlie. And he had this mask on of, a skull mask on, which we always had many of them around, and then he was dressed in kind of a worker's outfit, and he had our soft hammer in one hand and something else, a doll of some kind that was also soft, and he was beating the doll with the hammer and doing—

**Eichengreen:** [00:24:34] This is all in the window.

**Bailey:** [00:24:34] —all wild shenanigans.

**Eichengreen:** [00:24:36] This is just in the, you know, the window of the store and people—

**Bailey:** [00:24:41] And there was no notice that this was going to happen [chuckles], no rhyme or reason *why* it was happening.

**Eichengreen:** [00:24:48] And nobody knew it was him.

**Bailey:** [00:24:49] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [00:24:49] I mean, no one knew he was a Muppet, so to speak.

**Bailey:** [00:24:52] Yes, I mean, he did all the crazy ones.

**Vural:** [00:24:56] When was that, roughly? In the eighties?

**Eichengreen:** [00:24:59] I think early seventies—I mean late seventies, I’m sorry.

**Bailey:** [00:25:01] Yes, late seventies.

**Eichengreen:** [00:25:03] Yes. And it was before we expanded, because it was the original—

**Bailey:** [00:25:06] It was the small window—

**Eichengreen:** [00:25:08] Right.

**Bailey:** [00:25:08] —and a group gathered. It was Halloween night. By this time, the street wasn’t as forbidding as it was before. But that was a great night.

**Vural:** [00:25:22] That’s a great story.

**Bailey:** [00:25:23] I’m *sure* we have a few pictures of that somewhere.

**Eichengreen:** [00:25:27] Somewhere along here. Another—

**Bailey:** [00:25:28] We can find them.

**Eichengreen:** [00:25:29] —but you asked like who came to the store. Well, lots of people came to the store. But this situation that Bailey was talking about—Jerry—prompted my remembering: a guy comes into the store—this was the large store and it was at Halloween, and we *also*



specialized in having masks of various cultures. We went to Sri Lanka and we discovered that one of the Buddhist temples were selling their masks in order to raise money so that they could continue, and that was a real treasure trove.

[00:26:12] But on this particular time, I remember we had masks hanging from the ceiling and you could unclip them and then try them on and see if they fit and do whatever. And one day this guy comes in and he puts on the mask and he starts going through the store and, you know, talking to the other customers. And he goes—

**Bailey:** [00:26:35] And these were masks—excuse me—that were basically bird masks and they were made in Haiti and they were made out of felt, different colors of felt, and three-dimensional, but soft. And that’s basically what he picked up on was that they also covered over your head so you could become the bird head and no one would be able to see you at all inside it.

**Eichengreen:** [00:27:07] So, he went around and he was like spoofing on various customers, and someone said to him, “You know, you’re so good you should do this for a living.” And that was Robin Williams.

**Bailey:** [00:27:20] He pulled off his mask and looked at her and she said, “Oh, my God, [chuckles] you do,” [chuckles] or something like that.

**Eichengreen:** [00:27:28] It was like such a classic moment. I can’t tell you. It was marvelous.

**Vural:** [00:27:34] That’s great.

**Bailey:** [00:27:35] And he was a frequent customer because he just genuinely liked nonsense of the place, or the sensibility of the place, whichever side you want to look at. And we also had a lot of windup tin toys and we had a room full of them upstairs. We had rented an apartment in

the building and we kept there must have been three or four hundred of these toys in their boxes on shelving. And he would—after he had looked around at—and he bought lots of stuff—but he'd say, “Can we go up and play with the toys?”

**Eichengreen:** [00:28:16] [Chuckles]

**Bailey:** [00:28:16] And we'd go upstairs and I'd just pull stuff off and wind them up. There'd be these roller-skating clowns that would go all over the place, and robots with their blinking lights and all kinds of moving toys, in which the movements were the kinds of movements he could mimic and that he would do, because they're always *exaggerated* in the toy. The robots lumber along slowly. And we'd spend half an hour, forty-five minutes. He didn't buy those toys, but we just had a great time up there looking at them. Occasionally, he'd find one he really wanted and he'd take, but, you know, it was just a great time with Robin Williams [chuckles] playing with toys.

**Vural:** [00:29:09] Wow. So, who normally went up to the apartment? Did you invite customers? Or how did people know there was that other space?

**Bailey:** [00:29:20] Usually—we had the toys downstairs too, on a shelf you couldn't reach. And sometimes they were eight or ten inches high, four or five inches wide, in boxes with the picture of the toy, and then the toy next to it, so you could see they weren't the same. And people would buy those and often if they were that interested—and they weren't inexpensive—we'd say, “Well, we have some others if you want to take a look. We've got a room upstairs. We can show you some more.” And those would be the people that would go up, the real aficionados or the ones that really wanted something—

**Eichengreen:** [00:30:05] We should tell—

**Bailey:** [00:30:05] —special.

**Eichengreen:** [00:30:05] —we should tell the story about—we had a fellow entrepreneur shopkeeper in Boston and we overlapped and we bought together. And we did that with several people. We were just with someone two nights ago that we still maintain the friendship and he had a whole series of stores in Texas. And we bought with another person in LA [Los Angeles]. And these were sometimes toys from Japan that we would all go in on a shipment together.

[00:30:44] But at this particular time, Don Leavy said, “You know, there’s a book that was published in Switzerland that has all your toys in it.” We said, really? And then Bailey remembered that this guy came in—

**Bailey:** [00:31:00] Yes, this guy came in kind of early on a Saturday morning [chuckles] just after we opened and he came straight to the toy shelf and he started just pointing at the toys he wanted and took them off the shelf and started piling them up. And they were all about the same size, about the size of a six by eight, and a very graphic picture of the toy on the front. And I guess he bought about ten or twelve. And he asked for another one and I took the box and there wasn’t a toy inside it and there wasn’t a toy next to it. So, it was an empty box and we didn’t have an extra toy for it. He said, “Oh, that doesn’t matter. I’ll just take the box.” Okay. And I knew who I was dealing with. It was Andy Warhol. So, you know, what’s going to happen to this? Who knows?

[00:32:09] So, off he went. And our friend, who had come back from Europe and bought this book—was a kids’ book made of those thick cardboard pages, and on each page was one of the covers of our toys that we had sold to him two or three years before. And he also made a boxset

of silk screen prints to sell through his gallery of the same twelve boxes of toys, you know, the chimpanzee on a roller skate or the—

**Eichengreen:** [00:32:54] And these were toys from all over the world. I mean from Hungary, from Russia—

**Bailey:** [00:32:58] Right.

**Eichengreen:** [00:32:58] —China.

**Bailey:** [00:32:58] Some of the US, you know.

**Vural:** [00:33:00] Wow. And when would that have been roughly?

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:04] I think that was the eighties, early eighties.

**Bailey:** [00:33:06] Yes, probably.

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:07] Oh, maybe we were in the new store. No, no, no—

**Bailey:** [00:33:10] Oh, the big—

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:10] —it'd have to be early eighties. He died in the—

**Bailey:** [00:33:13] No, it was—yes.

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:16] Yes.

**Vural:** [00:33:17] So, then you expanded again, I believe, in '85, is that right?

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:20] Correct.

**Vural:** [00:33:21] Can you tell me about that?

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:23] Madness, total madness.

**Bailey:** [00:33:26] Yes, it was.

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:28] We received a character loan from Citibank from someone we met on the avenue who lived on Eightieth Street.

**Vural:** [00:33:37] Can you tell me what a character loan is? I don't know.

**Eichengreen:** [00:33:42] We had some collateral, but not a quarter of a million dollars, which was what the bank gave us. The character loan was "I know these two people, I know that they'll be good on it. Trust me." And that's how we got the loan, which we eventually paid off.

**Bailey:** [00:34:05] In total.

**Eichengreen:** [00:34:06] In total. And it was totally mad not to own the space, in 1985, and to invest a quarter of a million dollars to make it one whole space. And in order to do that, we had to shore it up. We wanted an open space, so that we created—they were load-bearing walls that we were opening and then re-lining the supports for the wall, so that we could have one huge space.

**Bailey:** [00:34:46] One horizontal space—

**Eichengreen:** [00:34:48] Which we—

**Bailey:** [00:34:48] —through—

**Vural:** [00:34:48] So, you doubled in size.

**Bailey:** [00:34:51] So, that made us double the size.

**Eichengreen:** [00:34:51] And then we doubled again.

**Bailey:** [00:34:53] So, that was now—we went from the three hundred to the six hundred.

**Vural:** [00:34:58] No to seven-hundred-and-fifty.

**Bailey:** [00:35:00] Seven-fifty. Then we became twelve hundred.

**Eichengreen:** [00:35:02] To fifteen hundred.

**Bailey:** [00:35:03] Or fifteen hundred—so, it became this gigantic space that—

**Eichengreen:** [00:35:09] For us.

**Bailey:** [00:35:09] —was frontage on Columbus Avenue, which was *the* avenue to have frontage on, right. So, we had all these windows on the avenue. But the interesting thing was to keep the store open while we did all this work. So, we actually had three different store configurations while this wall came down. And that was pretty interesting to design and figure out and—

**Eichengreen:** [00:35:46] And stay up late through the night—

**Bailey:** [00:35:49] Right.

**Eichengreen:** [00:35:49] —re-merchandising the store—

**Bailey:** [00:35:52] Exactly.

**Eichengreen:** [00:35:52] —into a different configuration.

**Bailey:** [00:35:55] And the basic design of the store was taken from a book on pinball machines and their layouts, so that the customer would be the ball and be shunted in the store on a diagonal and then be bounced around through the store and not have an easy way to get back out because

there was only one door. So, it was an interesting design concept to deal with and a fun, you know, a fun one, because pinball machines were still going on and they were always fun to play with and watch what happens.

**Vural:** [00:36:40] Where did that idea come from?

**Bailey:** [00:36:42] Oh, I always loved pinball machines and I had books on pinball machines—pinball machines through the ages, kind of. Anytime I saw a book on pinball machines, I would buy it.

**Eichengreen:** [00:36:54] And when we were in Japan, the pachinko machines. We actually brought a couple back and sold them in the store. So, as I said, this was more of an art project than a retail sense [chuckles].

**Vural:** [00:37:07] Can you tell me about the pachinko machines?

**Bailey:** [00:37:11] Pachinko machines are—

**Eichengreen:** [00:37:13] They have lots of little—

**Bailey:** [00:37:13] —pachinko parlors are a mainstay of Japan and particularly the big cities, Tokyo, etcetera. And they're usually small spaces *crammed* with these machines that are about five feet wide and about eight—six feet high, and you sit in front of them.

**Eichengreen:** [00:37:36] They're not five feet wide, they're about *this*, Bailey.

**Bailey:** [00:37:40] Well, what's that, three feet wide?

**Vural:** [00:37:41] Two and a half.

**Eichengreen:** [00:37:41] Two and a half.

**Bailey:** [00:37:42] Two and a half. Okay—

**Eichengreen:** [00:37:43] Thirty inches.

**Bailey:** [00:37:43] —two and a half by five, right? Anyhow, their layout on the back is vertical, not tilted like the US pinball machines. And there are all these little pins all over the board and little metal slides, and you get tiny, a little bigger than a pea, in silver, a metal ball, you put your money in and you get, I don't know, twenty of them and shoot one at a time and it scores as it runs down the playing field, so to speak. And of course they're colorfully painted and there's Godzillas games and there's—all the Japanese characters from their anime are part of the game you're playing. And big score. You can maybe make an extra three or four games to play or whatever. But it's really—the noise is deafening in there because it makes a big ping every time the ball hits one of those pins. And they're where everybody goes after work right away to unwind, to get their job out of their head.

**Eichengreen:** [00:39:13] Some people, Bailey, not everybody [chuckles].

**Bailey:** [00:39:16] Everybody goes. Everybody goes and then they go home to their family and settle down.

**Vural:** [00:39:22] So, when you decided to design a store inspired by a pinball game—machine—when you think back on that, how much was that a fun kind of art project and how much was it also thinking, well, this is going to be good for business?

**Bailey:** [00:39:42] Both. I would say—



**Eichengreen:** [00:39:45] We actually had an architect with us—I mean, we had to because of all the structural changes to the third store—Janusz Gottwald was his name—and he was very much aboard with the concept of the pinball and the customer being—

**Bailey:** [00:40:12] The ball.

**Eichengreen:** [00:40:13] —the ball and kind of ricocheting from one counter to another. And we had floating islands of—

**Bailey:** [00:40:22] We had cubes—

**Eichengreen:** [00:40:22] Yes, we called them cubes.

**Bailey:** [00:40:24] —white Formica cubes—

**Eichengreen:** [00:40:26] Grey Formica, yes.

**Bailey:** [00:40:28] —and they were on rollers, so you could push them together or separate them. But they were how we made the space for people to walk. And that was always on a diagonal to the store’s rectilinear front on the street and back on the building side. And the ceiling was also a zigzag format that the lights shone down from, or hung down from, so that that added to the pinball machine sensibility and aspect of it.

**Vural:** [00:41:09] And how did it work?

**Eichengreen:** [00:41:11] Oh, great.

**Bailey:** [00:41:11] Oh, great, because nobody could get out until they passed the—

**Eichengreen:** [00:41:16] Cash register.

**Bailey:** [00:41:17] —the cashier [chuckles]. You know, when I taught merchandising, that was one of the key things that I always tried to impress on these designers or students that wanted to go into retail. What’s the last place you want your customer to see? And that is the cash register. Got to make sure they know it exists and that’s, you know, where it’s important to have them stop.

**Vural:** [00:41:55] So, I want to go back in time a little bit and ask—Laurie, you were talking about how at some point the salon idea no longer worked and that then perhaps the next big change was that the space also being a studio where Bailey could make his art and maybe talk about art, maybe that had to go. You were saying that he was kind of teaching people about art.

**Eichengreen:** [00:42:26] Well, it sort of was—

**Bailey:** [00:42:30] Hard to keep me down on that one.

**Eichengreen:** [00:42:32] —sort of in stages. Once I was resigned to the fact that the couch had to go, we then started thinking that—this is in the early seventies—that maybe we had to make it a little bit more interesting. We had friends stay in the store. We were only open Saturday and Sunday. And we went away for a weekend and they came and they said, “You know, you should have more stuff here. We got all these people come in. They want to buy something. You just need more stuff.”

[00:43:19] So, okay, fine. We acquired more stuff. At that point we had no idea what was wholesale—the difference between wholesale and retail. We were real neophytes. As Bailey said, there was a table in back and he still continued to use that as his studio—had a ton of rubber stamps, and people would come and go through the wheel of rubber stamps and say, “Hmm, I want this one.” “Oh, no, no, no, that one’s not for sale.” So, then we had to—and early on, we

realized if we had it out, we would have to be able to sell it, because it was far too difficult to explain, “No, no, no, that’s not for sale, but this is for sale.”

[00:44:14] Somehow, we met Mario Rivoli—I think that’s his name.

**Bailey:** [00:44:16] Ah, yes, you met him. And he liked the store, but he was also a retail store designer.

**Eichengreen:** [00:44:26] Or consultant.

**Bailey:** [00:44:26] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [00:44:28] And he said, “You know what you have here is really great because you need to involve the public and—”

**Bailey:** [00:44:36] “In what you’re doing.”

**Eichengreen:** [00:44:38] —in what we were doing. And we always felt very egalitarian that we approached—you know, we love the kid who came in and picked up a toy as well as his parent, or his grandparent, for that matter. But Mario said, “You know, keep the buying office, keep all your desks, all your records. Make it one big space.” And even he—

**Bailey:** [00:45:06] In the back.

**Eichengreen:** [00:45:07] In back, as well as in front.

**Bailey:** [00:45:11] And keep it open, so people can see what you’re doing, that there’s activity back there and it’s sometimes furious, etcetera, wrapping packages and, you know, whatever’s going on, trying to look up records and—

**Eichengreen:** [00:45:29] It's kind of like the idea that you'll walk into a restaurant and you'll walk through the kitchen.

**Bailey:** [00:45:34] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [00:45:34] Or you'll *see* the kitchen.

**Bailey:** [00:45:35] Or you see the kitchen. Exactly.

**Eichengreen:** [00:45:38] So, we had that idea.

**Bailey:** [00:45:39] And it was kind of around the same time that that started to happen—

**Eichengreen:** [00:45:43] Exactly, exactly.

**Bailey:** [00:45:44] —in the city.

**Eichengreen:** [00:45:44] So, Mario could have been a consultant for various enterprises. And that was one of his, I guess, great ideas, that he reinforced our feeling that—there were just the two of us and then we had some additional help—but to see what was all going on.

[00:46:04] I have to say that Bailey's art studio eventually moved to this apartment. And this was I think in the late seventies, because we had our apartment photographed for *The Daily News* and showing that spaces, small spaces, can be many different things. And so in this room where we are right now, not only was it our living room, but it was also Bailey's art studio. That was very short-lived, I have to say [chuckles].

**Bailey:** [00:46:44] Just long enough for the article to get published [chuckles].

**Eichengreen:** [00:46:48] [Chuckles] As a spread, a double-page spread, in *The Daily News*. But anyway, we always had that organic feeling and that people could interrupt us or ask a question and we could come out on the floor and talk with people. And we never—and it was really because of this personalness, I guess you would call it, where we found it very difficult to clone ourselves. We were asked by other—we were asked by developers, let's say, to go to South Street Seaport and do a second store there, or to create a boutique in a department store, and we just could never understand—

**Bailey:** [00:47:39] We couldn't let go.

**Eichengreen:** [00:47:39] —how (a) we couldn't let go, but we couldn't really understand the dynamic that we had *in* the store with our customers and that so much not only was it creating a playpen, as Bailey first termed it, it was, we couldn't replicate—

**Bailey:** [00:47:59] A visual playpen.

**Eichengreen:** [00:48:00] Exactly—a visual playpen. But that was so much a part of the store was really the relationships that we were having. And we weren't really interested—we were interested in making some money, but it was the relationships, and what we were selling, that was more of interest to us than being pushed upstairs.

**Vural:** [00:48:28] So, it didn't feel like something that you could recreate without you.

**Eichengreen:** [00:48:32] Exactly.

**Bailey:** [00:48:33] Right. Or the only way it would happen is we'd go upstairs and disappear and kind of run it by the numbers and somebody else would have all the fun we were having, you

know, trying to make it work. And, mm, we weren't so sure they'd make it work, you know, because they wouldn't know why we brought the masks back from Sri Lanka.

[00:48:58] And we had these mini exhibitions all the time throughout the store, and events through the stores, and book signings way before most places thought about book signings. And, you know, we sent out postcards and we had parties and made a drink for the evening.

**Eichengreen:** [00:49:21] One of the first book signings we had was for *Cheap Chic*. A friend of a friend, Carol Troy, had written this book and they've just had their fiftieth—is it the fiftieth?—

**Bailey:** [00:49:38] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [00:49:39] —anniversary—which—was it Tim Gunn?—wrote the foreword to—

**Vural:** [00:49:43] Wow.

**Eichengreen:** [00:46:46] —from *Project Runway*. But we had, I think, the first booksigning for *Cheap Chic*, which was published by Clarkson Potter. And they could—*What? You want to have your book signing at Myth—what was the name of that place?*—

**Bailey:** [00:50:04] On Columbus—

**Eichengreen:** [00:50:04] —*at this little store on Columbus Avenue? Really?* And I guess it would be today going to the outer reaches of Bushwick and having your book signing. But that was one of our early events.

**Bailey:** [00:50:23] Right.

**Vural:** [00:50:23] That's great. So, I wanted to ask you—last time you told me about the photographer Louis Stettner.

**Eichengreen:** [00:50:29] Oh.

**Bailey:** [00:50:29] Oh, yes.

**Vural:** [00:50:30] Can you tell me how he became a friend and what his relationship was to the store?

**Eichengreen:** [00:50:34] Well, I can start off by saying that this very lovely woman came into our store and she said, “I’ve just published this book about my husband’s work and I was wondering if you would take five copies on consignment.” Okay, thumb through the book, “What do you think, Bailey?” “Sure.” At that time, we weren’t selling a lot of books. We hadn’t gotten full force into books. I mean, I think when we finally closed the store, twenty-five percent of our sales were in books.

[00:51:15] Anyway, a couple weeks went by, and I called her—her name was Janet Iffland—I said, “You know, we sold out of your books. We’d like some more. And I’d like to pay you for what we’ve already sold.” So, she came over and she brought me an invoice. I said, “172 West Seventy-ninth Street?” “Yes.” “Well, we live in the same building.” So, we had *no* idea that they—he or she—lived in our building. And through the years, Bailey got to know Louis. Well, you can tell.

**Bailey:** [00:51:53] Yes, it was one of those elevator meetings. And he was a very distinctive-looking guy with bushy beard and hair, just like you’d imagine a photographer in Paris in the forties or fifties, you know. He just had that look. And he was stocky built and walked with a direct amble and purpose in every move he made. And somehow, we said hello and then we got to talking in the elevator, and the next thing I know, I’m getting calls from downstairs, “I want you to see this photograph that I just did, I think you might like it. Why don’t you come on

down? You got some time now?” And it just grew like that to the point that we became close friends and we’d be talking—

**Eichengreen:** [00:52:52] And we still are with her.

**Bailey:** [00:52:51] —philosophy and photography and paintings, etcetera. And we’d start meeting him in Paris, where he was most of the time, and going to shows he was having at the [Centre] Pompidou or the Library of—

**Eichengreen:** [00:53:13] Bibliothèque—

**Bailey:** [00:53:13] —Bibliothèque—

**Eichengreen:** [00:53:14] —Nationale.

**Bailey:** [00:53:15] —Nationale. And we realized, Louis—you know, we acquired this book, but then realized there were seven other books on Louis Stettner that came along after Janet’s first one, which we have most of them scattered between this house and the other one.

[00:53:35] And he was just an extraordinary character. You know, I had never met anyone with such force, dynamics. He was, what, eighty—ninety-four when he died? Ninety-three?

**Eichengreen:** [00:53:51] Yes, eighty-three—ninety-three, yes.

**Bailey:** [00:53:53] So, he was, what, he was twenty—

**Eichengreen:** [00:53:56] Years younger, yes.

**Bailey:** [00:53:58] I was twenty years younger than he was—fifteen, I guess. Twenty? I’m eighty, he died in ’94, fifteen, roughly. And he actually invited me to go on shoots with him. And



we'd just walk down to Times Square, along Ninth Avenue, where he liked the character of everything there, and then all of a sudden he'd just take off and I'd see him crossing the street behind somebody that he wanted to get just the right angle from [chuckles] and not let them know that he was going to photograph them, you know. And he'd get in the angle in front and he was [clicks fingers] so fast and got just the [clicks fingers] particular shot he wanted, where a guy's selling from a newsstand, one of those little cramped newsstands with just a window, with all the tickets for the lottery. He'd go up to them and just say, "Can I take your picture?" And the guy would say, "Sure." You know? And he'd just do a snap. And there are all these fantastic images of people like that—all over the world—he traveled all over the world doing that. So, that was great.

**Vural:** [00:55:22] That sounds beautiful.

**Bailey:** [00:55:23] Yes.

**Vural:** [00:55:24] Tell me about how the avenue was changing during those years, during the eighties, as you doubled and then doubled again in size.

**Bailey:** [00:55:37] Well, it was—

**Eichengreen:** [00:55:40] Mixed blessings.

**Bailey:** [00:55:42] —getting more gentrified. More stores run by individuals who had their personal stamp had been developing all along. And some of them were stores with half a dozen different—they were storefronts with half a dozen different stores inside. And that happened in a number of spaces.

**Eichengreen:** [00:56:18] Right. They became like collectives. But I remember—and it really—for a while, all we saw were ice cream stores opening up.

**Bailey:** [00:56:32] But that happened after.

**Eichengreen:** [00:56:34] Well, what happened—I'm trying to think of when Gloria Vanderbilt had her Murjani store on Columbus Avenue.

**Bailey:** [00:56:44] See, I missed that one completely. I didn't know that.

**Eichengreen:** [00:56:46] And Tommy Hilfiger.

**Bailey:** [00:56:47] I remember Tommy Hilfiger moving in and us gasping, you know. Here's big print, big name, marketing worldwide, and—or they weren't that *big*, but they were obviously going to go there. And they were on Columbus Avenue [chuckles] in one of the storefronts, you know. And I don't know what left. But then there were a number of clothing stores that came in.

**Eichengreen:** [00:57:19] Of that same ilk, that were national brands. There was a transition in the avenue, when it ceased to be mom-and-pop and it became bigger corporations.

**Bailey:** [00:57:32] Brand. Brand and corporate.

**Eichengreen:** [00:57:37] And we kept on saying, "So goes the avenue." I have to say.

**Bailey:** [00:57:42] And as that developed, if you talk to the sellers/renters of the buildings, etcetera, the square footage was going up at a very astronomical pace, because these are huge—I mean by our standards—huge corporations that could pay and wanted to be on the avenue that had become Columbus Avenue from small little mom-and-pop stores and then some medium-sized stores and then all of a sudden—bang!—you have this corporate business moving in, and it

raises the square footage to the point where a mom-and-pop isn't going to be able to do it because they're all—

**Eichengreen:** [00:58:37] And the shoemaker couldn't stay in business.

**Bailey:** [00:58:36] —they're all going up—right—they're all going up. So, if you can't meet the rent, you can't pay that, you don't have a store anymore.

[00:58:52] And the next step after that was stores came in, the ice creams stores mainly, and knickknack—not—food vendors came in. They could—since all of their transaction takes place in a very small space, at a very high price per square foot for the service and the merchandise, the goods, like ice cream, they give, it all goes out the store with the customer. That they can afford to do, because they're doing it in half the space or a quarter of the space that the big store was doing and they can turn—you know, the ice cream cone that costs—I don't know—I have no idea of the prices of these things—but that it costs eighty five cents to deliver to the customer over the counter, they get \$2.85 or \$3.85 for because, again, it's a known brand that's in there. But their maintenance for that space—very little. They're not taking care of all the lighting that a big store would have, all the window displays, all the this and that. And they sort of took over. And they could pay equal to the fashion stores, and more. They could pay more. So the square footage went up another notch, you know, to accommodate them, which is why you had all these small, small shops with trinkets and food.

**Vural:** [01:00:42] So, did you see your own end coming at some point?

**Bailey:** [01:00:52] Well—

**Eichengreen:** [01:00:52] Not—no, because we just thought we could work harder and harder and harder [chuckles].

**Bailey:** [01:00:58] [Chuckles] We thought there'd be more hours in the day than twenty-four, but it turned out there weren't. And, yes, eventually we noticed that there were two lines coming together [chuckles], rent and profit, and they were about to cross each other and we would be on the losing end of that. So we had to close.

**Vural:** [01:01:22] And was that happening—like how much do you think your expansion was related to that or you think that wasn't?

**Eichengreen:** [01:01:31] I think it was the time.

**Vural:** [01:01:32] It was the time.

**Bailey:** [01:01:33] Yes. I think—

**Eichengreen:** [01:01:33] From 1987, when I think we had to renegotiate the rent, and when we left in '92, the city was going through a downturn and it was very clear, I would say, let's say, in 1989—well, what happened to Diane Keaton? She used to come here every couple of months at least. And what happened to, for that matter, even Woody Allen? So, there was—

**Bailey:** [01:02:15] Yes, where did our celebrities go? Well, they—

**Eichengreen:** [01:02:18] They went—

**Bailey:** [01:02:19] —stayed home.

**Eichengreen:** [01:02:20] —they stayed home or they went to the West Coast. And it was real clear that all of a sudden our customer base had changed dramatically *and* that the people who

did come in were really watching what they spent. And we were selling inexpensive things. So, what's going on here?

**Bailey:** [01:02:43] And there were first-time visitors as tourists—

**Eichengreen:** [01:02:47] Right.

**Bailey:** [01:02:47] —and so it was kind of, what is this place? Hmm. Strange.

**Eichengreen:** [01:02:54] Weird.

**Bailey:** [01:02:54] Some of them might have found it very interesting and might have purchased something, but you had to kind of get familiar with us before you became a repeat customer and knew that everything changed once a month and the whole place was kind of turned topsy-turvy.

**Eichengreen:** [01:03:17] So, I think it was really the economic—there were two things. It was the whole economy in the country, and *especially* in New York City, and the fact that the smaller stores, the mom-and-pop stores, were really squeezed out. As I was saying before, you didn't find a shoemaker. You didn't find Tap-a-Keg, they had left. You didn't find Miss Grimble, who had left a little bit earlier. What about The Cherry Restaurant?

**Bailey:** [01:03:54] That was out actually earlier than many because it got changed into Ruskay's. Right?

**Eichengreen:** [01:04:03] No, no, that was further down. But that was—

**Bailey:** [01:04:08] Oh.

**Eichengreen:** [01:04:08] —and that—when Ruskay’s went out, then it became a Duane Reade. What do we need a two-story Duane Reade on the corner of 76th—I think it was 76th and Columbus—and it had one time been one of the Limited stores.

[01:04:25] So, here we went through this high-fashion period. First, we had mom-and-pop stores like ourselves, little stores. Then you had the high-fashion stores moving in. And then all of a sudden, they left and we got—well, why would you go to Columbus Avenue to go to Duane Reade? Or even to Chase Bank? And that’s not what drew the interest—

**Bailey:** [01:04:50] Oh, and the banks. Look at all the banks you have occupying corner space. It’s enormous. And the banks can afford it because they’ve got the money [chuckles] that everybody needs.

**Eichengreen:** [01:05:05] So, I think it was compounded by the time and who came in. And I think that people, more adventuresome people, let’s say, went to Brooklyn. And, you know, I went to Brooklyn and I said, oh, my God, this feels like the Upper West Side the way I knew it!

**Bailey:** [01:05:28] Yes, those things shift. Just like the art world was in Soho and now it’s in Chelsea. You know, it’s partly the floor-space cost and the area that everybody gravitates towards and pulls more people along with them from the same market.

**Vural:** [01:05:49] So, I want to ask you about that. So, when you think about your history on Columbus Avenue and the trajectory of coming as an artist when the street was rough and participating in its change and then sort of feeling pushed out, what do you think about that? How do you make sense of your own experience and the part that you played in the shaping of the street?

**Eichengreen:** [01:06:25] Mm [chuckles].

**Bailey:** [01:06:26] That's a big question.

**Eichengreen:** [01:06:27] That's a real life question. I think we were really integral in the change in the Upper West Side, in making it a safer place to live, a more interesting place to live.

**Bailey:** [01:06:47] But it also took an enormous amount of energy and dedication to keep the bar high and make it an interesting place to come to, and the shopping for it all over the world, etcetera. And we weren't staying munchkins, we were actually aging ourselves along with it [chuckles]. So, that took its toll on the time and on us of what we could push into it as a constant.

**Eichengreen:** [01:07:25] And then I think we sort of reached middle-age and we said, whoa, there's something else to working twenty-four/seven, even though I do that right now [chuckles].

**Bailey:** [01:07:40] Laurie's built for that.

**Eichengreen:** [01:07:43] But even still, there's still time to grow and we now have time to do something else. So, maybe we have to do that.

**Vural:** [01:07:55] Do you have nostalgia for the early days?

**Eichengreen:** [01:07:59] Oh, for sure.

**Bailey:** [01:08:00] Yes, I mean, I, you know, having taken the space away from a wholesale candy seller, who had just crude racks where you could buy boxes of Snickers, and transforming it into a workspace for me, scraping the floors, cleaning the whole thing, making it like a, you know, a, for me, a jewel of a place to work was a great step, felt terrific. And I used it for a good, I don't know, three or four years before—

**Eichengreen:** [01:08:43] Oh, more.

**Bailey:** [01:08:45] —anything, maybe six years, before anything changed towards a retail store. And I was doing window displays too, strange displays that were going on, based on what I was thinking.

**Eichengreen:** [01:08:59] I have to interject. Our friend from Boston said, “You know, you have seven windows on Columbus Avenue. You know, you should put a wall up so that you have all that space for more merchandise. You’re missing a big opportunity to merchandise more stuff.” We said, “No, we want those windows so that people can look inside.” And then Bailey did these *amazing* windows. He had an assistant, just for the windows.

**Bailey:** [01:09:40] I have a sketchbook full of the drawings [chuckles] for the windows-to-be, and what colors would be where, based on the merchandise we had at the time—because they were always theme windows. They were about cats or they were about things in the sea or they were about Day of the Dead or, you know, whatever a topic was that we could gather from the store from all the assorted things we have and make a statement about look at this. A drive-in movie, you know, with reels of cartoons running because we were selling Leonard Maltin’s book on—

**Eichengreen:** [01:10:23] *Of Mice and Magic*.

**Bailey:** [01:10:24] —*Mice and Magic*. So, and we had a popcorn machine for the book signing.

**Vural:** [01:10:32] And were there things you learned about yourself during that time that surprised you?



**Bailey:** [01:10:38] Well, how much fun retail could be if you really let yourself loose and not give yourself too many restrictions. We had a lot of fun just—I mean, one of the big things was to travel to find merchandise somewhere in the world, you know, and we'd do it based on events that had mythological roots in the country that was doing a celebration. So, that would be why we would travel for a month to Thailand or Sri Lanka or Bolivia—

**Eichengreen:** [01:11:23] Mexico.

**Bailey:** [01:11:25] —Bolivia.

**Eichengreen:** [01:11:26] Right.

**Bailey:** [01:11:26] I mean, we went anywhere there was going to be a festival.

**Eichengreen:** [01:11:28] We did a lot of traveling.

**Bailey:** [01:11:30] Yes, and it was fabulous.

**Eichengreen:** [01:11:32] And always came back with stuff.

**Bailey:** [01:11:34] Yes.

**Vural:** [01:11:34] That's nice. Is there anything you regret when you think about the store?

**Eichengreen:** [01:11:43] Mm, [asks Bailey] what do you regret?

**Bailey:** [01:11:46] I don't have any regrets. It got—I guess for me, it just got to be too much to keep it going.

**Eichengreen:** [01:12:02] Feeding the monster.

**Bailey:** [01:12:03] Yes. I mean, and it was a monster we loved, so, you know, you didn't want to let it loose into the park. You just had to, you know, make sure it had enough to eat and it was maintained properly, etcetera.

[01:12:22] I mean, just every night we had a vignette of things from the store that had a spotlight on it, and when the store was closed, that spotlight lit up two, three, four things and they were always doing something to one another in a kind of chaotic way.

**Eichengreen:** [01:12:54] It was the night staff, who it was their assignment, before they closed the store, they needed to create this vignette—I've totally forgot about this—

**Bailey:** [01:13:02] Right, right.

**Eichengreen:** [01:13:04] —in front of the entrance, the two windows—the two doors—that you walk through. And it could be a simple thing, it could be complex, but it had to be a vignette, it had to be a story. And people came by, “Oh, what are these crazy people doing again? I don't believe it!”

**Vural:** [01:13:26] And so like what would be an example of a vignette?

**Bailey:** [01:13:31] Well, there was this toy called, because it came from China, Photoing on Car.

**Eichengreen:** [01:13:39] [Chuckles] I was going to tell—

**Bailey:** [01:13:39] And it was a pretty big—

**Eichengreen:** [01:13:43] Convertible.

**Bailey:** [01:13:43] —convertible car with a man and a woman in it, and I forget which one had a camera, and it would move around and then stop and the camera flash would go off from the

camera. Then it would move around again and the camera flash would go off. And there would be—they'd set up maybe three or four of our robots and have the car passing by and snapping the photograph of the robots.

**Eichengreen:** [01:14:18] They'd have maybe a very large Godzilla—

**Bailey:** [01:14:20] Right.

**Eichengreen:** [01:14:20] —because we sold Godzilla banks—you know, which was like twice or three times the size of the car, hovering over the couple in the car.

**Bailey:** [01:14:30] Right, exactly, whatever they—and we had a good staff, they had a good sense of humor and enjoyed this stuff, so it always worked. But it was just the accumulation of all these bits—you know, keep it lively.

**Vural:** [01:14:51] So—

**Bailey:** [01:14:51] And we did.

**Eichengreen:** [01:14:53] Yes.

**Vural:** [01:14:53] So, and what have you moved onto? I know, Laurie, that you went into landscaping.

**Eichengreen:** [01:15:00] Correct.

**Vural:** [01:15:01] And Bailey, did you go back to making your art?

**Bailey:** [01:15:05] Well, I actually was able to maintain making my art at least one night a week by renting a space in some other artists' studio where I could work. They'd give me a key and I'd

just go in and out whenever I had time. So, and I was all over the city, from down by City Hall to up at Lexington [Avenue] and 125th Street, wherever there were still artists doing work in the city in these small, smallish studios, but they were factory buildings and the factories were moving out, the sewing and printing and all that.

**Eichengreen:** [01:15:53] And Michael Weinstein was very generous.

**Bailey:** [01:15:56] Oh, yes, he had a restaurant on the East Side—

**Eichengreen:** [01:15:59] Metropolitan [Café].

**Bailey:** [01:16:00] Metropolitan Café. And—I forget. It was Second Avenue?

**Eichengreen:** [01:16:04] Fifty-third—yes, Second Avenue.

**Bailey:** [01:16:07] Second Avenue, Fifty-third Street. And he was just—it was an empty building. He was just doing a restaurant on the first floor. He said, “Take the second floor and do whatever you want. Just be neat and make sure that there’s nothing flammable or whatever that the fire inspectors might give me a problem with.” And so I did. I had that for about four or five years.

**Eichengreen:** [01:16:39] I don’t think it was that long, but you had it for a good time.

**Bailey:** [01:16:43] It was great, you know. So, I just bumped along.

**Eichengreen:** [01:16:46] It’s so interesting the friendships that we’ve made from the store. I think, when I look back, not only—we sold a lot of stuff and we have a lot of stuff around us, and I think we’re at an age now that we’d like to deaccession some of our stuff, but I think it’s

really the friendships. And I think that's what—not only did it keep it as an art project, but it was very important for us to connect with the community.

**Bailey:** [01:17:17] Oh, and all the people that we bought from, the vendors, became basically friends because we sold enough of their things that they made that they were happy to be part of Mythology and say that their stuff was available there. And, you know, it had a good reputation and it had a lot of people from Europe. It was a destination store when they came to the city.

**Vural:** [01:17:52] So, tell me about the actual closing. What did you do and what was that like?

**Eichengreen:** [01:17:58] Horrible. [Laughs] Just terrible. Bailey had a sign that he put up the last week. What was it, 110 percent off?

**Bailey:** [01:18:13] Yes. Actually, we realized that our cash registers could put in any amount as a discount. So, you could choose any number. It didn't have to be twenty-five percent or twenty percent, it could be twenty-three percent or whatever. So, I had papered the window. And we didn't even have a printer for a computer, but a friend of ours did, a friend of the store, and I'd just call in some—a couple of numbers and he'd drop them off that night and those, you know, would be big: "8-1-8 percent off today only." And then the day before that would be twelve percent, and then sometimes it would go down and up and you just never knew.

**Eichengreen:** [01:19:23] It was really just the last week or last two weeks, something like—

**Bailey:** [01:19:25] And there was the 110 percent off.

**Vural:** [01:19:33] Is there anything you want to tell me before we say goodbye? Is there any reflection you want to share or story you want to make sure you tell me?

**Bailey:** [01:19:49] Well, it was, I don't know, I think for both of us, it was a really interesting time to participate in the community and the Upper West Side and watch it change, and that we were a core member of that and—

**Eichengreen:** [01:20:09] And we were developing as the street developed. And I remember [chuckles]—I remember as the city improved, they put up bus stops—and I don't know if I mentioned this before—and they wanted to put a bus stop in front of our front door. And I went out and I said, “You can't do that. How are people going to come into my store?” “Well—” I said, “No, stop. You *have* to put it someplace else.” I made such a fuss that they moved it ten feet away, and it's probably in an irregular space, but I wasn't going to have them spoil that for us.

**Bailey:** [01:20:57] They knew they were going to have a problem and it wasn't going to go up [chuckles].

**Eichengreen:** [01:21:04] And another time that—I mean, which was just part of my ritual—was that I was always concerned—well, I *was* concerned—I would buy flowers for the shop. We never sold flowers, but I always wanted flowers at the front register. Why? I have no idea, when I think back on it. But I used to go to various florists around here, come in with a bunch of flowers and put them in the vase at the front register. But it was—I guess it was part of the salon days [chuckles] that I wanted that kind of interchange.

[01:21:42] But also that I would sweep in front of the store. And if I didn't sweep, then somebody else, the morning staff, would sweep and sweep the sidewalk, because we were proud to be there and we wanted a nicer neighborhood.

**Bailey:** [01:22:01] Yes, we were integral to the whole place. And we only lived a block away, so, you know, we were even more integral [chuckles] than we knew.

**Vural:** [01:22:16] What do you think of the neighborhood now?

**Bailey:** [01:22:20] Oh, it's kind of totally changed—again. And we've changed—totally. So, we don't have as many people to say hi to as we did in those days. I mean, we couldn't walk down the street without knowing somebody, or many people, as we went down.

**Eichengreen:** [01:22:43] Many people.

**Bailey:** [01:22:44] Now, we're pretty much strangers. And we have our old friends who still stayed here that are around, but—you know, and some people in the building here that have stayed. But pretty much it's a different neighborhood, has a different feel as a—you know, they're all different stores and we don't know the storeowners. So, you know— [phone rings]

**Eichengreen:** [01:23:12] It was funny—

**Bailey:** [01:23:12] —we only know them by going in.

**Eichengreen:** [01:23:17] —oh, there is a woman who lives in this building, and we just happened to take a crosstown bus today, together, and I made some comment, “Well, it's not like—you know, we're having Danny Meyer come in with [Daily] Provisions and I guess I'm looking forward to that, but it's not like when ‘the thieves’ used to be here.” She said, “‘The thieves’? Who are ‘the thieves’? Oh, but they were such nice guys! We know they're nice guys, it's just that our store staff, who went to them every day for their sandwiches, would call them ‘the thieves.’

[01:24:03] And they were from—she corrected me—I thought they were from Pakistan, but they were—they were obviously immigrants. And I later found out from a woman who lived on Seventy-eighth Street, who was totally bereft that they were no longer there after twenty years,

that they had keys for all the people, for many of the townhouses on Seventy-eighth Street—that they were in a sense the concierge for the block. And I can't imagine *that* existing now, and I'm sad. I think I brought it up in the context that I can't run out and buy—I was looking for memorial candles—that's how this all came about—and I would always go there and buy memorial candles. And tomorrow is the *yahrzeit* of Bailey's mother [chokes up] passing.

**Bailey:** [01:25:17] No more stores. We just have a big box.

**Eichengreen:** [01:25:19] And my father's birthday. So, I said, "Now, Joy, where can I go to buy a candle? I can't go to 'the thieves'." But it was just—we don't *have* that.

**Bailey:** [01:25:31] And it was a friendly terminology for them. The sandwiches were expensive, but they were the best [chuckles] in the neighborhood.

**Eichengreen:** [01:25:37] [Chuckles]

**Bailey:** [01:25:40] And it was, you know, it was a bodega, and it had that—

**Vural:** [01:25:44] So, the thieves—

**Bailey:** [01:25:44] —sensibility, which was great. And they made great sandwiches and they were nice guys—if you couldn't pay for it, "Pay me tomorrow."

**Eichengreen:** [01:25:55] Exactly.

**Bailey:** [01:25:56] You know, it's all that kind of looseness and character that's a quality that you don't find unless it's a neighborhood. You can't get that at Duane Reade, you know. And Duane Reade basically put them out of business by coming in and making a store that's supposedly a drugstore—



**Eichengreen:** [01:26:20] That sold groceries.

**Bailey:** [01:26:19] —but it's a drugstore in the back and it's a grocery store in the front and a clothing store in the front and a fragrance store all over and, you know, it changes the whole way you think of a neighborhood.

**Eichengreen:** [01:26:36] And there are three Duane Reades from Seventy-ninth to Seventy-second Street. There are actually four between Broadway and Columbus and Amsterdam. And this is not a barrio. I mean, it was a barrio, as you say in Spanish, a neighborhood, and I think that that quality, unfortunately, doesn't exist—

**Bailey:** [01:27:06] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [01:26:06] —as we remember it.

**Vural:** [01:27:08] So, and the thieves was a way of making fun of the fact that their sandwiches were expensive?

**Bailey:** [01:27:13] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [01:27:14] Exactly—and that they were also from the Middle East, you know.

**Bailey:** [01:27:22] But not so much that. It was just a tag that our staff—I mean, we were paying them okay, but we weren't paying them high wages.

**Eichengreen:** [01:27:38] Needless to say, we were paying them far more than minimum wage. But that said—

**Bailey:** [01:27:42] Yes. But it was just a tag that attached to them, but it was kind of a neighborhood—and it was too bad. We really *lost* them as a character and quality of the

neighborhood. And then we got the high-priced butcher shop and Food Emporium, and now it's been vacant for—

**Eichengreen:** [01:28:12] At least a year.

**Bailey:** [01:28:13] —at least a year, or more, because—

**Eichengreen:** [01:28:15] And another [Food] Emporium is going in. But, so it's just different.

**Bailey:** [01:28:18] It's different.

**Eichengreen:** [01:28:20] Different.

**Bailey:** [01:28:20] Different.

**Vural:** [01:28:21] And is Joseph Campbell still important to you?

**Bailey:** [01:28:23] Still, yes. Right, he is. And it's going to be interesting because he's coming back on PBS [Public Broadcasting Service] with the same series [chuckles]. He doesn't die. He just keeps on talking to Bill Moyers and answering those questions.

**Vural:** [01:28:41] That's perfect.

**Bailey:** [01:28:43] So, timeless questions get answered once more.

**Vural:** [01:28:47] By the same man. Perfect.

**Bailey:** [01:28:48] Yes, it's going to be great. And I'll watch.

**Vural:** [01:28:51] Good.

**Bailey:** [01:28:53] So, yes, he's around. And he has a big organization now that takes care of business on a mythology level. So, that's nice.

**Vural:** [01:29:07] Good. Should we say goodbye? Alright.

**Bailey:** [01:29:11] Okay.

**Vural:** [01:29:12] Thank you.

**Eichengreen:** [01:29:13] Thank you.

**Vural:** [01:29:14] You are both so lovely.

[INTERRUPTION: RECORDER TURNED ON AGAIN AS CONVERSATION CONTINUES]

**Eichengreen:** [01:29:20] One thing was interesting about the store is that there were—Bailey had a series—had his *very* own customers, people who came in just to talk to Bailey. And I remember one time, I was at the register and everybody saw me blanch. [Whispers] “Oh, my God.” It was Donald Sutherland, who *stormed* into the store and wanted to know why his wife was taking so much time and they were on their way to the airport.

**Bailey:** [01:29:59] [Chuckles]

**Vural:** [01:30:02] And ever since then he [indicates Bailey] has kidded me unmercifully [chuckles] about my crush on Donald Sutherland.

**Vural:** [01:30:12] [Laughs]

**Bailey:** [01:30:12] And his wife was a regular.

**Vural:** [01:30:15] That's good.

**Eichengreen:** [01:30:16] And then there was the time that—well, there were two times—Mia Farrow was a long-standing customer of the store, and she came in when we had the small store. And we were selling a lot of T-shirts. And I'm folding the T-shirts. I'm sitting on the floor folding the T-shirts, putting them in the little drawers, and I said, "Oh, my God." And there were like six, seven kids came in. I said, "Oh, my God, look what the wind blew in." And there was Mia with like eight kids and they were all in pairs, because there was a young one who had a little older—

**Bailey:** [01:31:00] And they were holding hands.

**Eichengreen:** [01:31:01] Yes. And I gasped.

**Bailey:** [01:31:03] They were perfectly, you know—

**Eichengreen:** [01:31:07] Oh, polite.

**Bailey:** [01:31:09] Right.

**Eichengreen:** [01:31:10] But she came in in the bigger store and she was very pregnant and she said, "You know, I'm needing a present for my boyfriend."

**Bailey:** [01:31:23] [Chuckles]

**Eichengreen:** [01:31:25] I said, "Sure." [Chuckles] And I called Bailey over, because I was going to lose it at that moment.

**Bailey:** [01:31:36] And she bought a Ferris wheel—

**Eichengreen:** [01:31:37] That's right.

**Bailey:** [01:31:37] —for his Coney Island days, which was nice. Nice old Ferris wheel, made a dinging sound when it went around.

**Eichengreen:** [01:31:47] Oh, and you can tell about Georgianne Walken came in looking for a present for Christopher [Walken].

**Bailey:** [01:31:54] Oh, yes. And we looked at a number of things, and it wasn't quite right, And I said, "What about this guy?" not even realizing that it was perfect. It was a skating dancer or something.

**Eichengreen:** [01:32:12] No, no, no, it was called Dapper Dan and he was wearing a two-tone purple suit.

**Bailey:** [01:32:17] Oh, yes.

**Eichengreen:** [01:32:18] He was like a barker, and you wound him up and he was like dancing. And he—

**Bailey:** [01:32:24] Dancing Sam was the title.

**Eichengreen:** [01:32:26] Right, exactly.

**Bailey:** [01:32:27] And he was on a box, and then there was a pin that went up and down, but his arms were loose and his legs were loose. So that when the pin went up, his arms and legs went all different ways. And we had the box, and it was perfect.

**Eichengreen:** [01:32:45] Because Christopher Walken started off as a song and dance man.

**Vural:** [01:32:49] Oh, fun.

**Bailey:** [01:32:50] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [01:32:51] And that's how he met Georgianne, as they were dancing at one time together before his acting career. And she is a casting director for *The Sopranos*.

**Bailey:** [01:33:04] So, we had a lot of fun that way, too, you know, with just— [makes a delighted sound]

**Eichengreen:** [01:33:08] And I had—this man comes up to the counter with a stack of books—maybe ten or fifteen books, I'm not exaggerating—and he had gone through the store and selected all of the popular culture books. I said, "Ooh, this is really interesting that you've made this interesting selection of books." And I happened to be at the register at the time. And he handed me his credit card. I said, "Oh, my goodness." I think his name was like Atori [Elio] Fiorucci, but it was the man from Fiorucci. And I said, "Oh, my goodness, I have to tell you, I *love* your store *and* I'm wearing a blouse and skirt from your store—look!" And it was rockets and—

**Bailey:** [01:34:09] Love at first sight.

**Eichengreen:** [01:34:11] —out of sight, space objects on a black background. And here I was. "See? Here I am."

**Vural:** [01:34:19] Wow. There's Joseph Campbell right there for you.

**Bailey:** [01:34:22] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [01:34:22] Exactly.

**Bailey:** [01:34:23] Exactly. And he [Fiorucci] was a constant customer whenever he came to the states to check on his store over by Bloomingdales. He would come through the store and pick up—and then the next year, the next fashion cycle, there would be that stuff printed on fabrics and a theme in his store.

**Vural:** [01:34:44] It's like the collective unconscious doing its work, right?

**Bailey:** [01:34:45] Yes.

**Eichengreen:** [01:34:45] Exactly.

**Bailey:** [01:34:47] Absolutely. Happening.

**Eichengreen:** [01:34:38] That's really what we were after.

**Bailey:** [01:34:39] And he found us, you know. Somehow, he found us. The word got out.

**Eichengreen:** [01:34:56] So—

**Bailey:** [01:34:56] And that's how it worked. It was great.

**Vural:** [01:35:00] That is great. Okay, now I'm going to turn it off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]