

Third-Generation Business Continues Shoemaking Art By Marc Rosen, CPed

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A sculptor brings an image to life. A writer paints a picture in your mind. These types of art are known for their vision and creativity. Unfortunately, there is one art that sadly gets little notice: custom-molded shoemaking. To handcraft a design from the creators mind to a fully functional tool for walking can be inspirational.

Fortunately, in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, metro area, we have one of the few design centers of custom-molded shoes on the East Coast. Best-Made Shoes in Bloomfield is a third-generation accredited foot care center dedicated to total foot health. Gene Rosen, CPed, and his son, Marc Rosen, CPed, believe that if your feet hurt--everything hurts. You can't work well with sore feet; you can't live well with sore feet!

Gene's father, Charlie Rosen, had a shoe store in 1939 in Brockton, Massachusetts, that specialized in shoes with the most sizes and widths for a proper fit. He studied at the Scholl Orthopedic Training School, Chicago, Illinois, and began to design custom-molded shoes and orthotics in 1955. He was an old-fashioned shoe salesman who believed the customer always comes first and deserves to be treated to the best. His shoes were needed for those that had foot trouble and couldn't get relief from ordinary shoe stores.



Second Generation Joins In

He taught his craft to his son Gene, who began to help his father at the store when he was 12 years old. Gene continued to help people in the Army orthotic facility during the Vietnam War. After his army stint, he furthered his training at the Northwestern Medical School Prosthetic/Orthotic Center (NUPOC) in Chicago. In 1976, he became one of the first board-certified pedorthists in the country. Board-certified pedorthists design custom-molded shoes and orthotics according to a doctor's prescription. They help relieve foot pain associated with disease, overuse, or injury.

In 1977, Gene came to Pittsburgh and opened the first foot care center in the city. Best-Made Shoes combined a custom-molded shoe factory, retail store, and repair center in one building. There were so many people in need of foot pain relief that he received 60 calls the first day after running a newspaper ad.



Third Generation Comes Aboard

In 1995, Gene's son Marc joined the family business, and together they became the first father-and-son board-certified pedorthists in the history of Pittsburgh. Marc went to Northwestern for his training, just as his father had done. Marc later expanded the company's Birkenstock and European comfort footwear collections, as well as designing and implementing its interactive website: www.bestmadeshoes.com. The website has brought people from all over the country. People have flown in from North Dakota, Florida, New Jersey, California, and many other states because they haven't been able to find expert help in their areas.

In 1999, Best-Made Shoes moved from its original location to a modern, spacious facility that includes a parking lot, handicapped-accessible ramp, large showroom, and an entire floor dedicated to its custom-molded shoe and orthotic business. Best-Made Shoes has helped over 30,000 people, and the word is spreading.

In 2001, Marc was chosen by Pittsburgh Magazine as one of the 50 finest young professionals in the city. In addition, Best-Made Shoes was chosen a reader favorite in the best-shoe-store category in the Pittsburgh City Paper for four straight years (2000 - 2003).

