

Success Story

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Louis Cohen Honored For 50 Years As Peoria Businessman

By C. VERNE BLOCH

A success story lies behind the engraving on the handsome bronze plaque with which Louis B. Cohen's employes honored him at a surprise luncheon on his 70th birthday yesterday.

The message of affection and esteem from his associates, past and present, recognizes the Peoria merchant for his more than "50 years of outstanding business leadership, pioneering and accomplishment."

And good wishes came, too, from Cohen's friends throughout Central Illinois who know him not only as an astute businessman but as an outdoorsman, farmer and civic-minded philanthropist.

Except for a stint as an auto mechanic in a local garage, Cohen spent his youthful years during and after high school working in his father's store—which at that time was a small second hand furniture store in the 500 block S. Adams St.

DURING WORLD WAR I Cohen left the store to serve in the Army. Upon his return his father retired from the business and young Cohen assumed ownership and management. He took over the adjacent building, obtained financial backing and bought out the Reliable Furni-

ture Co. which had been its occupant.

Thus began for the Cohen Furniture Co. a period of dynamic growth under Cohen's leadership, during which time the business grew from what was started in 1879 by his father as a small store and furniture repair business into what is today the largest retail home furnishings concern in downstate Illinois.

Leaders of the furniture industry at both the manufacturing and retail level consider Cohen a pioneer in his field. In his early years he instituted policies in his business which at that time were considered revolutionary but are today standard practice with most successful furniture retailers.

These policies reflect Cohen's firm belief that to merit the continued good will of the consumer it is necessary to give honest values day in and day out and back them with an unconditional guarantee.

Also, from the start he has refused to sell items which could not be serviced by his own service departments. Long before it was popular in the furniture industry, he believed in a "one price policy," in truth in advertising, and in



LOUIS B. COHEN

treating his customers with extreme courtesy.

In 1951 Cohen was honored in ceremonies at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York City by the entire retail industry when the Cohen Furniture Co. was named furniture store of the year by the Brand Names Foundation. In 1954 he was named one of 10 All-American Merchants by the National Retail Furniture Assn. Numerous other honors and awards have

been accorded the company and Cohen through the years.

DESPITE THE hard work and long hours he spent building his business in the earlier years he always found time to fulfill his love of nature and the outdoors. He was a charter member of Peoria's Sunday Morning Baseball League and sponsored a Cohen Furniture Co. team from the league's inception to just a few years ago.

His love of hunting and fishing and the outdoors in general is well known. He is considered one of the best sportsmen in these fields in the area. His love of children has been another strong influence in his life and many of Peoria's younger adult hunters and fishermen were given their first start in these sports by Cohen.

Recently, he supervised the construction of his personally-donated Lake Robinet to the Girl Scouts of Peoria at Camp Tapawingo near Metamora.

Cohen through the years has been a major contributor to most of Peoria's organized charities, welfare agencies and hospitals — and also has helped countless individuals through periods of trouble and distress. He was a pioneer in

hiring the physically handicapped. And his love of nature finds expression in his activities as a gentleman farmer and dog lover on his stock farm near Laura.

Cohen attended Lincoln grade school and Peoria High school, and while at the latter school was active in sports — playing football and serving as captain of the baseball team.

HE WAS MARRIED to the former Ruth Levenberg of Chicago May 24, 1925. He has a son, Robert, and a daughter, Inette (Mrs. Harry M. Goldstein) and five grandchildren. Cohen served on the National Retail Furniture Assn. board of directors for 14 years, was a director and vice president of the Peoria War Chest and Community Fund during World War II.

He is a member of the Creve Coeur club, American Legion, and Anshai Emeth Temple. He is a Shriner. He was active in earlier years in the Association of Commerce and served as a director. He is a member of Ducks Unlimited and the Old Timer's Baseball Assn.

He is a member of the board of directors of the Commercial National Bank and is chairman of the board of Cohen Furniture Co.