



## **Margaret's Story, Chapter 6**

Joseph was working for his father who had a textile mill in Elland, but very soon – I don't know who first, whether his father decided that Joseph was unemployable or whether between them - they didn't work well together. So Joseph left and – well actually he started up on his own. What he did, this first business venture, was to buy up seconds that his father's factory produced – second quality woollen coatings – and they had lots of faults so he decided to flock print them, to have them flock printed which covered up the faults – and he ended up selling those pieces for more than they sold the first, you know because it was a novelty, it was a different new cloth. So a) his father gave him credit when he bought the pieces from them, and when he sold them he could pay them back, so that was the way our first money was made, on selling cloth. And then he started buying very cheap shoddy wool and having blankets manufactured on commission.

It didn't last very long before we had, we rented a sort of Anderson shelter, it was a corrugated building, and where we started Kagan Textiles.

Joseph is starting playing around with various cloths trying to make a cloth which would keep you both dry and warm.

This cloth, which is a combination of an outer layer – at the time cotton and then we developed a coating and to that coating then it was adhered a woollen lining and the wool was woven very loosely so that it has trapped air so that it conserves, you know the best insulator after a vacuum is air, so it traps the air to keep you warm and an outer layer which is proved keeps you dry. So eventually we then tried to sell the cloth. And Joseph was a good salesman. In spite of that, no one wants to buy the cloth.

So then Joseph decided, OK, well we can't sell the cloth but I think it's a good cloth. We patented it, I think somewhere around '48, it was a patented cloth but nobody wanted to buy it. We are still selling blankets, thank goodness, which keeps us alive. And Joseph said "OK, we'll have to make coats to prove that it's a good cloth and it makes good coats and we'll make some coats".

And Joseph did his usual sales trick, he went to Harrods, he went everywhere to try to sell, starting from the top, nobody would buy the coats, they said "Well you know have you any testimonials? You are telling us it's a very good coat but has anybody ever worn it?" he says, "I have!" they said, "That's not

good enough, if you had somebody like a famous person has worn it then maybe.” So then Joseph gets in touch with the Palace and gets to know James Macdonald who was a very nice, who was, works with, what was he the Duke of Edinburgh, and he sort of says “We’ve got this very nice coat which, I wonder whether the Duke, who does a lot of outdoor shooting and so on, would like to test it, it would be very good for him”. So he said “Well OK but where can he get it?” He said “Well you go try and get it from Harrods”, so this chap, “it’s called Gannex”. Macdonald goes to Harrods and says “Can I have a Gannex coat”, they said “No, we don’t have it, we don’t stock Gannex, but we’ll get you one”. So anyway that’s just a little typical story of Joseph’s inventiveness. And so we’ve got, I’ve still got hanging in my office a picture of Prince Philip wearing a Gannex coat.

So we eventually finished up manufacturing coats ourselves and then we saw this factory which we were sort of starting selling and this factory called Broad Lee Mills which was strangely enough a silk factory, there weren’t many silk factories in this area but this was a closed-down silk factory and we kept looking at the building and thinking “What a nice building, it would be nice to have it” but it was too big for us, too expensive. Well the company grew to the extent that we eventually did buy Broad Lee Mills. And we said “We can always rent out the rest of it we don’t need,” but within a year we used all the space, we had lots of machinists, we were selling well, and manufacturing coats and in fact it wasn’t many years before we started sending out and having outworkers because we couldn’t produce enough coats.

So what next? So we are now successful, we’ve got a large manufacturing concern, and after Philip, Joseph befriends Harold Wilson or Harold Wilson befriends him. He enjoys talking to Joseph and of course gets wearing a Gannex coat. And there comes a day – I don’t remember the exact days when we have outworkers, we have the Gannex factory, we have another little concern manufacturing coats in Heckmondwike, an outpost, and across the factories and outworkers we employ about a thousand people. Batley, we have of course Batley, I forgot about Batley, we took over Batley and we had a large combining plant there. We used to manufacture then our own linings. Before we used to buy the linings and now we manufacture our own.

Of course everybody, it’s common knowledge that because we are large employers and have made a difference to Yorkshire, Joseph gets a knighthood for services to industry and one of our directors presents us with this tray, a silver tray on the occasion of Joseph’s getting the knighthood.