

Mendelson was last of Craig St. pawnbrokers; [FINAL Edition]

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The last of Montreal's colorful Craig St. pawnbrokers, died Friday at home in his sleep. He was 80.

Mr. Mendelson had a shop for 63 years in the Montreal Urban Community Transit Corp. building at what is today 167 St. Antoine St. W. until it closed five years ago. Strictly speaking, it wasn't a pawnshop but a second-hand store that bought and sold anything of value.

During the 1920s and 1930s, there were at least 30 such shops on the strip then known as Craig St.

Mendelson was born in Saint-Jean on June 15, 1915, one of six children in a Romanian immigrant family.

His father, Morris, opened the first store on Craig St. in 1906. His three sons, Louis, Hymie and Harry, all went into the business.

Their stores were behind the Bank of Montreal's head office on Place d'Armes, which often prompted the wisecracking Mr. Mendelson to say: "Ask anyone who's behind the Bank of Montreal and they'll tell you, Mendelson's."

Mr. Mendelson married Lillie Shaevitz in New York in 1937. They had two daughters, Carol Shore and Susan Erdelyi.

Rabbi Myer Schechter, who delivered the eulogy at Mr. Mendelson's funeral at Shomrim Laboker Synagogue on Sunday, described him as "a sort of a character, an individual, a nonconformist, a joy to have around."

"He wasn't formally religious, but he was religious in his charity. His main joy was to help people. He had a generous heart and he helped many, many people. He'd never make a commotion about it. He never sought any honor, he was spontaneous. His store was a landmark. I always thought it was an institution."

Mr. Mendelson operated his business on the principle "if it doesn't eat bread, leave it on the shelves" - in other words, everything will eventually find a buyer.

He bought and sold almost anything and the shop resembled a flea market, filled with old silver, oil paintings, cameras, coins and musical instruments.

When Mr. Mendelson went out of business five years ago today, a reporter wanted to know what article left in the store was the most valuable.

``Harry Mendelson," he replied without hesitation.

He was predeceased by his brothers, Louis in 1981 and Hymie in 1995.

Mr. Mendelson is survived by his wife, two daughters, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

*** Infomart-Online ***

[Illustration]

Black & White Photo; MENDELSON: HAD SHOP FOR 63 YEARS

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