PHOTO BY JIM KNOWLES

Joe Serratore put new heels on a pair of shoes at his downtown shop.

By Jim Knowles

San Leandro Times

Back in the days before Nike started giving every athlete a truckload of shoes for free, the A's and Raiders players took their shoes to Joe Serratore.

Serratore knows how to do just about anything with shoes. He learned how to repair shoes from his dad when he was a kid working in his dad's shop in Canada.

"I started when I was 12 years old," Serratore said.

He's owned Ed's Shoe Repair in East 14th Street in downtown San Leandro since 1967, the year before the A's moved from Kansas City to Oakland. So the A's spiffy white shoes got repaired and polished right here at Joe's shop.

And we can't really say whether Joe added a little something extra to the shoe of Raiders punter Ray Guy, because that's off the record. Houston Oilers coach Bum Phillips suggested that Guy might have been kicking a helium-filled football on his booming punts. That must be it, because Serratore wouldn't break any NFL rules.

These days not as many young people are following Serratore's footsteps and learning the trade.

"There used to be a shoe repair shop on every corner," Serratore said. "Now, there are just a couple."

Serratore is having kidney dialysis now, so he's not at the shop every day but a friend fills in for him.

A lot of people today buy those $29 shoes that aren't worth repairing, but there are still plenty of people who wear good shoes that they want to keep for a long time.

Joe repairs shoes, boots, handbags and all leather goods and replaces heels and soles. The rack in the back of his shop is stacked with heels and soles made of thick Italian leather.

Serratorre was busy one day this week putting new heels on a pair of shoes, smoothing out the edges on a big machine before applying the glue and nails.

"After 60 years I could do this in my sleep," he said.

A lot of customers come in from Oakland as well as San Leandro, and he has a lot of loyal women customers.

Joe has to explain to customers when his prices go up — it's because his rent went up. He just had a $200 rent increase, and that burns him up, since downtown business isn't on the upswing.

"Women, I love, but they complain when the price for heels went up," Serratore said. "But I tell 'em that's because my rent went up."

Ed's Shoe Repair, 1375 East 14th St. in downtown San Leandro. Phone: 357-8887.