

As seen in the ***“New Milford Spectrum”*** – Friday March 15, 2002

If you ever get the chance to see actor Matt Damon’s leather floor in his Manhattan digs or Sylvester Stallone’s leather-drenched trailer he uses on movie sets, you’ll have seen some of the finest leather in the world. And it all came from a two-generation family business based in New Milford.

Teddy and Arthur Edelman Ltd. Produces “the highest-end leather in the world,” said John Edelman, President and son of the founders, Teddy and Arthur Edelman. “My parents have been making leather for more than 50 years,” most of that time in Johnstown, NY, making leather for the shoe industry. The business still has a 20,000 square foot plant in Johnstown where leather is finished.

Edelman Ltd. Is the last family-run leather company in the country. And while the business has competition “on price, at the moment they’ve left us alone to create the highest-end leather products,” Edelman said. But the Edelman legacy in leather goes back beyond Teddy and Arthur. “All my grandparents came from Russia at the beginning of the 1900’s,” he said. One grandfather was a tanner, the other a furrier. Teddy’s father passed along the craft to her, “and both my parents have always worked together,” he said.

The Edelman family moved from New York City to Ridgefield 33 years ago, then decided to open Teddy and Arthur Edelman Ltd. in Danbury on Rowan Street in an old hat factory. “The city told us one day we had to move out in two weeks because the building was condemned,” he said. The family moved to the Hawleyville section of Newtown, outgrew the building, then “found New Milford,” he said. “It was an incredible opportunity, an incredible building at a good value. And we liked New Milford.”

The 63,000 square-foot building on Pickett District Road has 41 full-time employees that “do everything from customer service to sales to marketing to shipping and receiving.” Edelman said. The Edelmans travel to Europe to hand-select cow hides, “the best raw material in the world,” because European cows are raised without barbed wire and without branding, and “they clean the cows off at night because dung and urine can stain the hide and it unusable.”

Edelman Leather finds its way into the most exclusive surroundings, from private airplanes to elegant restaurants to high-powered law offices to corporate boardrooms. The elder Edelmans “saw a void in the industry for high-end leather for interior design, and opened this company to fill that void,” he said. The business has showrooms or sellers in every major city in the country, selling to interior designers.

But what the parents are passing along to John is more than a leather business. “It’s a craft passed down from generation to generation.”