

# A short man's haven

Queen St. store caters to the small businessman

By RICHARD MCKERGOW

When one walks through the door of Short Man by Brown's on Queen St. West, one enters a modest pocket of the world where the tall are at no advantage.

Every business must have a niche, and no one understands this more than Lou Brown, the owner of two Brown's stores in Toronto, one on Queen, and one on Avenue Rd. where high-end clothes are sold for no one over 5'8".

"[Brown's] truly is a short man's world," he says with pride in his Queen St. location.

The shop started out as a second-hand clothing store that Lou's father, Willie Brown, began in the early 20s, after immigrating to Toronto from his native Poland.

When Lou Brown quit school to work at the store at the tender age of 15, the Browns decided that it was time to start selling only new clothing. Lou Brown, a short man himself, found an affinity for making clothes for other short men who wanted to dress smart, and after owning the business for several years, he dedicated the upstairs loft of the Queen store to such merchandise. After some soul searching and practice, however, he decided that he would take a gamble, and sell exclusively to short men. This involved saying goodbye to many of his regular customers, and almost starting from scratch. It was a slow start, but the gamble paid off. In 1982, Brown opened a second store at 1975



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— Short Man by Brown's owner  
**Lou Brown.**

Avenue Rd. This was around the same time that Brown had approached mainstream manufacturers, and can now offer clothing cut right from such labels as Hugo Boss, Bugatti, and even Tommy Hillfinger. Brown's has built up a large number of faithful clients all over the world. Doug Henning, Rick Moranis and Frankie Avalon include some of the better known customers.

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Lou Brown checks over his latest shipment of socks.

ficulty of finding clothes that fit properly for the short man. One of Brown's fond memories of building his store up happened years ago, when a couple came in, in a rush to buy a single item. However, when the man saw Brown's upstairs loft with clothing in his size, he slowed down and took his time to peruse the merchandise.

Brown's is now operating with the help of the family's fourth generation; Lou Brown's son, and his granddaughter are involved in running the stores, a fact that he thinks resonates with the customers.

"The Avenue Rd. location is more of a family oriented-store," he says.

Brown has received many offers to sell his Queen St. location. And although he has been through a depression, and several dramatic changes in the type of business he runs, he intends on keeping his location a constant.

"We're here to stay," he says.