

Welcome to TimesPeople
Get Started

TimesPeople recommended: **The Technicality Generation**

11:05 AM

[Recommend](#)
[HOME PAGE](#) [TODAY'S PAPER](#) [VIDEO](#) [MOST POPULAR](#) [TIMES TOPICS](#)
[Get Home Delivery](#) [Log In](#) [Register Now](#)

The New York Times

N.Y. / Region

Search All NYTimes.com

Go

[WORLD](#) [U.S.](#) [N.Y. / REGION](#) [BUSINESS](#) [TECHNOLOGY](#) [SCIENCE](#) [HEALTH](#) [SPORTS](#) [OPINION](#) [ARTS](#) [STYLE](#) [TRAVEL](#) [JOBS](#) [REAL ESTATE](#) [AUTOS](#)


For Eddie Feibusch, a Life in Zippers



Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

Eddie Feibusch surrounded by his inventory at his store, ZipperStop, which opened in 1941.

By [RALPH BLUMENTHAL](#)
Published: April 18, 2010

What, you need a zipper? O.K., Eddie Feibusch is going to sell you a zipper. Brass? Nylon? Swarovski rhinestone crystals? What color? Mystery orchid? Big or little zipper? For a purse? Or a hot-air balloon cover? How many? One? A thousand?

[Enlarge This Image](#)


Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

"Nothing replaces a zipper," Mr. Feibusch said.

Doesn't matter. Mr. Feibusch is sure that he has the zipper for you. It's somewhere in his store, ZipperStop, at 27 Allen Street between Hester and Canal Streets, among three floors of shelves with boxes of zippers in 502 colors.

How many zippers does he have? "One million, millions, I don't know — more than a million," said Mr. Feibusch, 86, a zipper man going on 70 years. His [Web site](#) plays Sinatra singing "New York, New York" and says, "Unzipping America since 1941." Of course he has a Web site. This is 2010.

Anyway, he can find you a zipper. "Tell me what size and what length and I'll give it to you within 30 seconds," he vowed.

He sold a zipper for [Margaret Truman](#)'s wedding gown when Miss Truman, the president's daughter, married [Clifton Daniel](#) in 1956, he is proud to say. He sold zippers to Nike for [Tiger Woods](#) and [Roger Federer](#). And a prison in North Carolina called for a zipper for [Bernard L. Madoff](#). Why? He doesn't know.

[SIGN IN TO RECOMMEND](#)
[TWITTER](#)
[SIGN IN TO E-MAIL](#)
[PRINT](#)
[REPRINTS](#)
[SHARE](#)

CYRUS
JUNE 18

Get New York Today by E-Mail



Sign up to receive the best local offerings from NYTimes.com, every weekday.

 [Sign Up](#)
[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW:

Call 1.877.RBSOCCER
or visit
www.newyorkredbulls.com

[BUY TICKETS NOW](#)

MOST POPULAR

[E-MAILED](#) [BLOGGED](#) [SEARCHED](#) [VIEWED](#)

1. Marijuana Fuels a New Kitchen Culture
2. A New Clue to Explain Existence
3. Well: Time to Review Workplace Reviews?
4. Magazine Preview: The Teachers' Unions' Last Stand
5. Mind: Can an Enemy Be a Child's Friend?
6. Maureen Dowd: All the Single Ladies
7. Findings: Doomsayers Beware, a Bright Future Beckons
8. Personal Best: The Right Way to Warm Up Is (Your Answer Here)
9. Bob Herbert: A Very Bright Idea
10. Thomas L. Friedman: Obama and the Oil Spill

[Go to Complete List »](#)


A variety of plug-in hybrids

ALSO IN AUTOS »

A crossover that's more about sport than utility

New York City's garment industry once had lots of zipper shops, some bigger than his, Mr. Feibusch says. But little by little they relocated, to China, India, Costa Rica. Then came the Sept. 11 attacks. "They couldn't get their goods in," he said. "That was the end of the business."

But not for Mr. Feibusch, a prewar refugee from Vienna who overcame not just the Nazis but also Velcro, and opened his business on Dec. 7, 1941, of all days. Yes, a Sunday. He is Jewish; he takes the Sabbath off and works Sundays. Today, he says, he is the last big New York zipper man standing, or at least the last to exclusively represent the Japanese-owned but made-in-America [YKK zippers](#) (slogan: "Little Parts. Big Difference") — the best, to hear Mr. Feibusch tell it.

Why the best? That's an easy one. "Nobody makes them better."

So when a recalcitrant zipper threatened to be, or not to be, Queen Gertrude's undoing in a [Metropolitan Opera](#) production of "Hamlet" last month, the Met dispatched a costumer, Michael Zacker, to Mr. Feibusch for a new zipper for [Jennifer Larmore's](#) gown. "He really has great products," Mr. Zacker said.

Retail, they go from 50 cents for a nylon dress zipper to \$100 for a No. 10 brass zipper, 350 inches long, to wrap your hot-air balloon.

How great are zippers? Don't even get Mr. Feibusch started. They are watertight for deep-sea divers, airtight for [NASA](#). "Nothing replaces a zipper," he said. Buttons? He made a face. "A button is unpleasant," he said.

O.K., a quick [history of the zipper](#). Elias Howe, inventor of the sewing machine, patented an "automatic, continuous clothing closure" in 1851. But then he dropped it. So that wasn't the zipper. At the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, Whitcomb Judson and Col. Lewis Walker showed off their "clasp locker," a hook-and-eye shoe closure that latched two rows of jagged facing teeth together. But it took their head designer, Gideon Sundback, an electrical engineer, to increase the number of teeth from 4 to up to 11 per inch, to join and separate them with a slider, and to build a machine to manufacture continuous chains of the "separable fastener," patented in 1917. This was the zipper.

B. F. Goodrich registered the term in 1925 when it added the fastener to its rubber boots. French fashion designers were won over in 1937 after the zipper beat the button in "The Battle of the Fly." And Esquire magazine said the new zippered fly promised to end "the possibility of unintentional and embarrassing disarray."

Back to Mr. Feibusch. His parents, Isaac and Anna, owned a grocery store in Vienna, but after annexing Austria in 1938, the Nazis arrested Isaac and shut the business. Relatives in Brooklyn helped arrange the family's emigration to America in 1939. Eddie, then 16, went to New Utrecht High School. For three weeks. He dropped out to become an errand boy in a grocery store, then a clerk in a garment shop. "And then, in April 1941," he said, "I got into the zipper line."

With Europe at war, zippers were hard to come by. He worked for a shop in Brooklyn that reclaimed zippers from used clothes. Then he had a revelation: "If my boss can do it, I can do it." He quit in December to open his own shop at 111 Hester Street. "I had a cousin across the street who could fix me lunch," he remembered. The rent was \$20 a month. He was coming to open up the first day when he passed a candy store with big newspaper headlines: Pearl Harbor Bombed.

In May 1943 he was drafted into the infantry and joined the invasion of Italy. His mother took over the store. At Anzio he was shot in the stomach, groin and leg and spent a year in Europe recuperating and another year in a hospital in Atlantic City. "I was one of the first ever to have a colostomy bag," Mr. Feibusch said. He pulled up his shirt to show scars.

One of his aunts had seen a pretty girl getting her hair done in a beauty parlor and impulsively asked if she wanted a blind date with her nephew. Which is how Mr. Feibusch met Susie Neugarten, who herself had fled the Nazis with her family. Her relatives checked

[Get your dream car on a budget](#)

nytimes.com

AUTOS

ADVERTISEMENTS

Find your dream home with
The New York Times Real Estate



Fan The New York Times on Facebook

The new issue of T is here

See the news in the making. Watch
TimesCast, a daily news video.

The New York Times
Editors' Choice App for iPad.
presented by
CHASE
SAPPHIRE

The New York Times

him out. Susie's grandmother came to the zipper shop and pulled out the bottom boxes, to make sure there were zippers there too, not just in the top boxes to look good. There were. They married in 1950.

In 1982, Mr. Feibusch lost his lease and moved around the corner to 30 Allen Street. In 1999, an upstairs tenant, irate over a lack of heat, sloshed gasoline over the floor and burned down the building, including all the zippers. Insurance covered the loss and Mr. Feibusch opened up across the street at 27 Allen.

He has a staff of 12, mostly Chinese, and his son, Jeff. (His daughter, Diane Resnick, lives in Florida.)

"I can count in Chinese; I know colors," Mr. Feibusch said. "When they talk about zippers, I know what they're talking about."

A version of this article appeared in print on April 19, 2010, on page A19 of the New York edition.

Times Reader 2.0: Daily delivery of The Times - straight to your computer.
Subscribe for just \$4.62 a week.

[SIGN IN TO E-MAIL](#)

[PRINT](#)

[REPRINTS](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Zipper & thread](#)

We supply all kinds of garment Zipper and Sewing thread

www.jvzipper.com

Related Searches

[New York City](#)

[Zippers](#)

[Fashion and Apparel](#)

[Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

[Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

[Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



ART & DESIGN »



[Strange Trip for a Piece of Nazi Past](#)

BUSINESS »



[How Cows Could Help Power Google](#)

DINING & WINE »



[An Urban Farming Pioneer Sows His Legacy](#)

OPINION »

Until We Meet Again

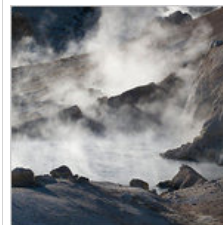
After a ten day visit to Africa, Mitch Smith writes on Nicholas D. Kristof's blog about his lasting impressions.

MAGAZINE »



[Judging Women](#)

OPINION »



[Olivia Judson: Life in the Third Realm](#)

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Autos](#) | [Back to Top](#)
[Copyright 2010 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Site Map](#)