

Freeway to Cut Fabled Street

By KENT BIFFLE

Progress is freeways and Jinx Remover that comes in spray cans.

Ed Kay, 43, sprayed some of the dejinxing stuff around his Mo-Jo bag shop at 2410 Elm Saturday. He hopes it'll make his store safe from freeways.

He's in the path of a 10-lane freeway leg that will sweep north from the downtown section of Thornton Freeway to intersect North Central Expressway and Woodall Rodgers Freeway.

That is, the freeway leg will sweep north if Kay's Jinx Remover fails.

"Everybody's got to believe in something," says Kay with a shrug.

WHEN THE FREEWAY comes, it will cut the heart out of the district known as Deep Elm, a fabled, down-at-the-heels strip of pawnshops, shoe shine parlors, second-hand stores and walk-up hotels.

Its people refer to Deep Elm as "The Street." And the freeway, most of them agree, will kill The Street.

Dist. Engineer B. L. DeBerry of the State Highway Department said Saturday he hopes to start construction within 18 months. Appraisers are at work.

Nathan Rosen, 50, has been on The Street 30 years. For nine years he's been running a grocery store at 2518 Elm. "This is a poor man's store," he said, emphasizing the point with a story.

A burglar once tried to cash a stolen check for \$37.50. Rosen noticed, however, that the check was actually for \$3,750. He phoned the cops. The burglar ran out but was nabbed, tripped up by thinking small.

Another businessman in the path of the freeway is Isaac Zylberbaum, 65, who's been fixing and selling shoes on The Street for 25 years.

"THEY NO TELL me nothing. Nobody tell me. They got to buy the buildings but still no bought. I believe they'll come maybe next year.

"I come from Poland 25 years ago. I'm a citizen now. I was young when I come here. Now I'm old. I may lease a little shop and fix shoes maybe three days a week somewhere."

Milam Furtuzula, 74, runs a cafe at 2516 Elm with a reputation for providing a meal for a quarter. Ask Furtuzula what's the specialty of the house and he'll tell you: "I sell cheaper than anybody else."

He's been on The Street 45 years. Like the others, he hates to go. "Working hard is all I know. Maybe I retire. I'm getting too old to work. Depends on how I feel."

OSCAR JACOBSON, 61, has been on The Street 30 years. Most recently, he's been running The Bargain Store at 2508 Elm. He said, "Deep Elm is washed up. I hate to see it happen.

"What I'm going to do is wait and see

where everybody goes because if it starts up a new section somewhere that's where I want to be."

This is the reasoning of several storekeepers who'll be moved out. "You've got to have foot traffic," they all say.

Deep Elm has changed. Most people date the change as beginning just after World War II when the Central Railroad tracks were removed from the district. Bars, gambling joints and bawdy houses withered.

Jacobson can remember seeing as many as five men laid out waiting for the ambulance.

Honest Joe Himself (Ruby Goldstein) runs one of the biggest pawnshops or junk shops or whatever in Dallas.

"THERE'LL be other places where bums will hang out—only let's don't call them bums, let's call them people down on their luck—but there will never be another Street just as there will never be another Bowery."

Honest Joe won't lose his buildings—just part of his backyard. "They're doing me a favor. That backyard is a mess," he grinned, standing in the mess inside the store.

Honest Joe believes the freeway sweep through the 2500 and 2400 blocks will write finis to The Street. "What good will it do if they put in a 30-story insurance building across Elm from me? Those people won't spend a nickel with me.

"It's the end of Deep Elm," said Joe.

And a sign in the window says, "Truthful Joe never told a lie in his life."



—Dallas News Staff Photo by Joe Laird.

Honest Joe . . . "It's the end of Deep Elm."