

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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We've been doing this for almost 20 years, how many years I don't even know. We've lost count. We've been doing it a long time. We started in 495 glorious square feet on 118 Ave and 142nd Street some 19 or 20 years ago. After five years at home, I began Bliss' Baked Goods; fresh baked fun for everyone. Everyone's favorite tiny bakery we became and we outgrew it and we moved here and we've been outgrowing this. Business is like weather -- sometimes it's good and sometimes it's good, because weather's never bad because whether you like it or not, it is.

What gave you the idea to start a bakery?

So you want to know how G-d made me a baker -- I've been in food a long time including butchery, as well as construction. I did well on the side in both butchery and in construction but I hurt my back so much that I was facing a third surgery to correct problems that I was still having with my back after two successful ones. I needed to repeat a surgery, so here I was looking at a third one potential one that was going to make me very uncomfortable because it would fuse part of my back and I would lose complete mobility instead of just partially. Between seeing my surgeon and going on a trip to Baltimore where we had fresh bagels every morning, I came home and discovered that by making bagels, by kneading dough physically, getting physical again helped. Because I was a butcher and did construction, my body was used to physical things but with damage to my back it meant that I had to look for a new way. It turned out that the exercise I needed was actually getting back into physical work and it saved me from having a third, potentially a devastating third surgery. I was a butcher, now I'm going to be a baker. When my retirement comes I'm going into candlesticks. Why not? It's a nice way to make a living.

We do our best every day -- we come every day to do our best and it shows. It goes in the results, it shows in the quality of the product, it shows in our staff's attitude and their joy in working with us. We're very fortunate to have been integral -- part of this COVID problem. We were deemed

essential, so it's nice to know that donuts are essential. We also serve the needs not of just kosher needs, for those who want it from the community. Kosher is very few unfortunately, I wish there were more. I knew when I started this that in order to be different it wasn't enough just to be kosher, so it had to be specialized. So being *pareve*, being food neutral, meant that there was no milk and I received many phone calls of gratitude that their allergies were now being met. Nobody had been doing that in the city, but for every call for dairy I got 20 for nuts. I'm not stupid and we made this into Edmonton's only dairy-free, nut-free, kosher bakery. With that being unique and world-famous donuts -- we're not just with bakers, we're also world famous donuts. They're handcrafted, I know because I make them every day. They're a handcrafted product that's quality and people trust us. That's another real benefit to doing what we're doing. We really see this place as being a blessing for us. For some people businesses curse them, others bless -- this one blesses us. I'm grateful every day to come in here, to have the strength to come in here. It's not always easy, but some days are very good.

We're very close to the Ghermezian family and we're truly blessed to have been a part of the 20 some odd years that they supported the Edmonton Kollel. I was proud to be a part of that. At the end of June it's all disbanding because of their financial problems unfortunately. We wish them nothing but absolutely *hatzlacha* that they should find success in all their endeavors and Hashem should bless them so well that they can redo this again at some point in the future. If we could have more here again, unfortunately that comes to an end. We are members of Beth Israel and we'll learn to be a part of that community somehow. We don't know yet how we're going to do that because we don't live close to there. To walk to shul, I don't think a two and a half hour walk will work. Both my wife and I go back to the original NCSY group that was there, we have a lot of history with the shul. My parents, family, a lot of people we know are gone -- I'm not part of the community that we were anymore and we look forward to being with what's left and what's new.

I don't think I have an answer for that question because I don't think there's anything I miss about Edmonton. I grew up in Edmonton, I attended Talmud Torah for better or for worse, whatever experiences that I had there not everybody came out feeling the same way as I did. But I knew that I was a Jew and I knew that I'd go further. Thank G-d there was opportunity for that. I got a

good education in terms of reading Hebrew, writing Hebrew, etc. Talmud Torah was very interesting and I miss it, but I'm not nostalgic for the past. I believe in the present, the future is yet to come. Today is one day at a time, that's how we live our lives and that's how we try to do our best. Every single day we don't think about tomorrow because it isn't here, but we think about and focus on today.