

## **JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE**

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Paula Weil - JCC & Synagogues

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*Yiddishkeit* is really important to me and to our family. I would say number one would be the home where observances are observed. Number two would be the synagogue.

The JCC, when it was viable and really active, was a wonderful place. In fact, we moved from Grosvenor into Rio Terrace so my kids could be walking distance to the JCC. They took swimming lessons, they took pottery, they took all kinds of things. Like every day after school they would go to the JCC. In the morning they were there at six o'clock for swimming lessons with Ian Feldman. It was a terrific place. It wasn't religious, but it was *Jewish* and everyone there was Jewish. It was a wonderful thing for our family to be close to.

My husband's family is very traditional in observances and so we were involved in everything. My mother-in-law always had Friday night dinners, my sister-in-law, may her soul rest in peace, always had the gatherings for the birthdays, and I had the larger gatherings for the *seders* and Rosh Hashanah and break the fast and such. *Yiddishkeit* was always a big part of our lives. We were synagogue affiliated; my husband was born and raised in Beth Israel. My father-in-law sang in the choir and we were always at Beth Israel. Then my father-in-law passed away, and then we moved with Beth Israel to the new synagogue which became a little more religious. It didn't have a microphone so that was a bit of a problem because my husband is hearing impaired. We stayed there for a while but he just couldn't hear. When people can't hear what's going on, what do they do? They talk, which made it even worse for him. So we decided to go to Beth Shalom where there was a microphone. Even though we belonged to the Beth Israel our observances weren't strictly Orthodox -- we didn't keep *Shabbos*, I kept kosher but we didn't keep *Shabbos* and such. So we went to Beth Shalom and then the new rabbi of Beth Israel came. He's my cousin so we thought well, if you're not going to support family, what's family all about? So we went back to Beth Israel and they made a point of putting Eric in the second row so that he could hear. Rabbi Claman has turned out to be a real blessing for this community and a blessing for our family. I

knew him as a kid and the last time I saw him was in Israel in 2013. He had just gotten married at that point and Penina was pregnant with their first daughter. So it was awesome to see them again and right away we became very close with the kids and with them. Even during COVID, well until things got really bad, we were having porch visits and driveway visits with them. We got very close. I have to say, even being in the Orthodox synagogue we never felt... he always made everyone feel welcome. He's not dogmatic, he's not political, he's very relatable and respects and is kind to everyone, no matter whatever your level of observance is. So we always felt very, very comfortable there. Leaving Edmonton, that was one of the many reasons that it was difficult. His mother and I are first cousins and we grew up together in Calgary and were always very, very close. His grandfather and my father were brothers. When my father, if you can imagine, in 1956 deserted; he just went to work one day and never came back. So my uncle Nate, his father became a real father figure to the three of us Greenberg kids. All of those things just brought Zolly and I really close together. We're missing them, we're even missing the driveway visits. We're Facetiming and having visits, but it's not the same. I have a niece there, Lisa Grobman, we were in Edmonton for 45 years so we have friends there since we moved. Yet by the same token, leaving in a pandemic is probably the easiest thing to do. We weren't going anywhere, we weren't seeing anybody there and so here in Calgary, we're not going anywhere, we're not seeing anybody. So for that, it probably helped. Moving, at this time, it hasn't been terribly emotional for me. I know once things open up and we can see our friends and we meet in Red Deer for lunch, it's going to become emotional. But at this point, it hasn't really been because nothing's changed.