

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Paula Weil - Our Parents' Home

April, 2021

I was approached by Sharon Marcus and also somebody else, but mainly Sharon Marcus about being the *mashgiach* at Our Parents' Home, or *mashgicha*, as they call with the feminine version. At first I said no, I didn't really want to get back into working. Long story short, they begged, pleaded, and cajoled and so I came for an interview. The interview went great, we signed a contract, and I started there in January 2019. I loved it from the first moment. As I said to my son "I love my seniors" and Marc says, "Mum, you're a senior." I said, "No, I'm a junior-senior, these are senior-seniors." I always involved everyone -- if I made knishes, we had them for dinner. I mean they went to the kosher people, but I also made enough for dinner that night for everybody. When it was the holidays, like on Rosh Hashanah we did packages with an apple and honey and a little explanation. For all the holidays we did special things. We did them for the whole residence, not just the Jewish residents. I got to know the people -- I spent a fair amount of time in the front of the house and I really got to know people, their preferences, likes and dislikes. So on a certain day if I made cream of tomato soup I made sure that they called certain people that I know love tomato soup. At that point, they weren't posting things ahead, so we started doing that. I got to know people and I just loved my job. The hours were perfect -- I was working from nine to one, Monday to Friday. We started doing Shabbat dinners again. They had done Shabbat dinners before when the previous mashgiach was there and they were getting eight or ten people. Once I started doing them we had to cut them off at 35 or 40 because they would take at least half of the dining room and we couldn't encroach on everybody. There were many non-Jewish people that came for the dinners also. Mr. Chetner conducted the services and he had handouts that he gave everyone all the time with all the prayers. It was an abridged version of *Shabbos* but it was a lovely version of *Shabbos*. Every month we made different things; brisket one month, then chicken one month, and veal another month. I kept everything rotating so it was a real treat for everybody. One of the funniest things was one of the *Shabboses* was a very hot summer day so I made gazpacho, but I had a feeling that this one older lady would not like it. She was very traditional and actually a Holocaust survivor beside that, older in her 90s and very

traditional with what you have on *Shabbos*. So I went up to her and I asked her if she liked it and she told me no, you don't serve cold soup on *Shabbos*. So I went into the kitchen and I warmed up another bowl for her and she loved it. I mean little things like that I was so happy to do for people. I got to feel like some of them were like my parents or uncles or aunts. Even after I had my accident and I wasn't working there anymore, I got calls from many of the residents to see how I was and when I was coming back. It was very gratifying. It was a lovely year of my life and I really enjoyed it. There wasn't an aspect of it that I didn't like -- the staff were fantastic to work with, we helped each other. There was no "this is your area and this is my area". If I was done in my area I'd go into the non-kosher kitchen and see if they needed help. And if I needed help and there was someone there that could help, I could bring them in and show them what I needed done and it would get done. It was a beautiful part of my life and I was heartbroken when I had my accident and I couldn't go anymore, but you know things like that happen.